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SERMONS

UPON SEVERAL
PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

By the Late Reverend

EDWARD LITTLETON, L.L.D. K

Fellow of ETON-COLLEGE, and Vicar of
Maplethorpe, Oxon; and late Chaplain in
Ordinary to His MAJESTY.

*Published by Subscription, for the Benefit of
his Widow and Children.*

VOLUME the FIRST.

L O N D O N:

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MDCCXXXV.



TO THE

QUEEN

MOST EXCELLENT

MARY II



have

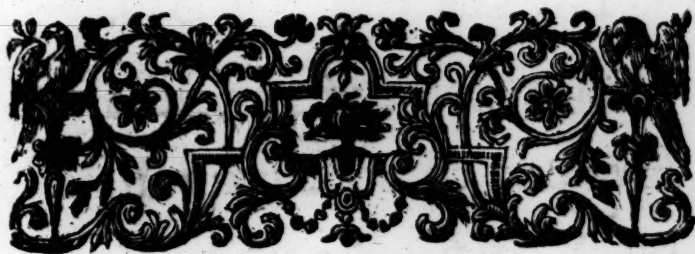
to picture to

Your MA-

ESTY the

Discourse of a Person

who



TO THE
QUEEN'S
MOST EXCELLENT
MAJESTY.

MADAM,



BEG leave
to present to
YOUR MA-
JESTY the
Discourses of a Person,

A 2

who,

DEDICATION.

who, when living, had the
Honour to be distinguish'd
by YOUR ROYAL FA-
VOUR.

The Occasion of making
them Publick is too well
known to be dissembled,
and too affecting to be men-
tioned without Concern.
The Title Page contains the
History of my Misfortunes,
and as it bespeaks *the Com-
passion* of the Readers on
account of Personal Cir-
cumstances,

DEDICATION.

cumstances, so it will (I hope) bespeak *their Candour* with regard to the Performance, which had never otherwise been communicated to the World.

That an *Address* on this Occasion, from one of your meanest Subjects, should be directed to YOUR MAJESTY, will appear strange to none, but such as are Strangers in ENGLAND; *such as are unacquainted*
with

DEDICATION.

with YOUR MAJESTY'S
Condescension and Generosi-
ty. The frequent Offer-
ings of this Kind made to
YOUR MAJESTY, are so
many Testimonies of your
MAJESTY'S *Goodness*, which
we have seen *most laudably*
displayed, both in the Re-
lief of the *Distressed*, and
the Encouragement of the
Learned the Clergy in ge-
neral; *and Those especially*,
who bear a nearer Relation
to

DEDICATION.

to YOUR ROYAL PERSON, have amply experienced the gracious Influence of these Virtues.

Would to God that your Dutiful Chaplain, the Author of these Discourses, had liv'd to have made this Grateful Acknowledgment, which is now *on a sad Occasion*, and in an imperfect Manner attempted *by his unfortunate Widow*.

The

DEDICATION.

The Nature of the Case
speak its self better than
any Words I can use, *and*
YOUR MAJESTY'S *known*
Goodness confirms my
Hopes of *Your Favourable*
Acceptance of these Dis-
courses, *with all Humility*
Presented by,

M A D A M,

YOUR MAJESTY'S *most Dutiful,*

and most Obedient Subject,

and Humble Servant,



C O N T E N T S.

I. *THE Duty of Rejoycing for good Times:*
Upon Ecclef. vii. 14. Page 1

II. *Self-Love the best Motive to Religion.*
Pfalm xix. 11. p. 19

III. *The separate Interests of this World and the*
next reconciled. Col. iii. 2. p. 39

IV. *The Necessity of well Husbanding our*
Time. Psalm xc. 12. p. 58

V. *The one Thing needful. Luke x. 41, 42.*
p. 81

VI. *Mysteries no real Objections to the Truth*
of Christianity. Deut. xxix. 29. p. 106

VII. *All Words to be accounted for at the Day*
of Judgment. Mat. xii. 36, 37. p. 130

VIII. *The Duty of continual Watching.*
Mark xiii. 37. p. 157

VOL. I.

2

IX. A

CONTENTS.

IX. *The true Nature and End of Fasting.*
Mat. ix. 15. p. 180

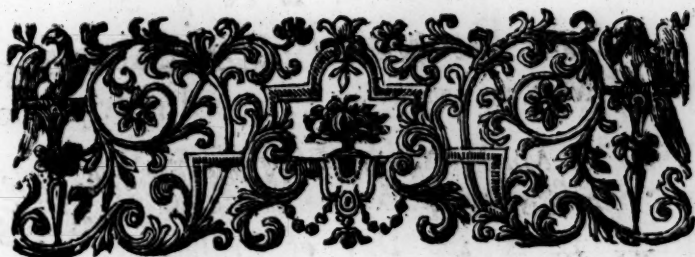
X. *A Man's Christian Name his best Title.*
1 Cor. i. 1. p. 205

XI. *We must not Judge others by what they suffer.* Luke xiii. 2, 3, 4, 5. p. 231

XII. *A Posthumous Fame not worth the seeking.* Gen. v. 25, 26, 27. p. 256



The



*The Duty of Rejoycing for
good Times.*

A

S E R M O N

Preached before the
KING on the Coronation-
Day, in *October* 1732.

ECCLES. vii. 14.

In the Day of Prosperity rejoyce.



THE great and wise King,
who was the Author of these
Words, has taught us else-
where, that to *every Thing*
there is a Season, and a Time for every
VOL I. B Purpose

The Duty of Rejoycing

SERM. *Purpose under Heaven.* Accordingly, he

I. points out, in the Words before us, the proper Season for the Exercise of our Joy. It is *the Day of Prosperity*; by which we are to understand, either, *First*, all prosperous and good Times in general; or *Secondly*, in particular, those Times or Seasons, when any private or publick Blessing has been convey'd to us. In either of these Senses, it is a Precept of great Weight, and may at this Time, be very seasonably considered.

First then, let us suppose the Royal Preacher's Words to extend to all prosperous and good Times in general; and let us also suppose, that they are not only a Permission, but a Precept or Direction to rejoyce in those Blessings, which, at such Times, we do all severally enjoy. I say, let us suppose this to be the meaning of the Words. For though they may, indeed, be so limited and restrained, as to signify no more, than a bare Licence or Permission to
rejoyce

rejoyce in the good things, which God's SERM.
Providence dispenses, as if it had been I.
said, we may innocently delight, or lawfully take Pleasure in them; yet since, besides this, there is another Kind of Joy, arising from the Sense of God's Goodness and Compassion in imparting such Blessings to us, and since the Exercise of this Joy will be shewn hereafter to be a Duty we are all bound to pay, I think it more likely, that my Text was intended as a *Precept*, to cultivate and promote this Joy. A Subject more useful and important in itself, and more worthy of the Royal Preacher's Care.

This being supposed to be the Meaning of the Words, I proceed, in pursuance of the Doctrine contained in them, to shew,

First, that in all prosperous and good Times in general, it is the Duty of all Persons, in their several Stations, to rejoyce in those publick, as well as private Blessings, which God's Providence

SERM. bestows upon us. As to private Blessings, all prosperous Events, from the happy Issue of our own Projects and Designs, do *naturally fill the Heart* with Joy: And if Men would but sanctify and improve this Joy, by a grateful Sense of God's Bounty to them, they would do all that is necessary to make a *Virtue* of it, and to convert the Success of their temporal Designs to their spiritual and eternal Welfare. But besides these private, incidental Blessings, there are others of a more general, and publick Nature, which, though they are greater and more important in themselves, are less apt to strike the Mind with Pleasure. These I shall distinguish into natural and political: By natural Blessings, understanding those, which God has dealt to Mankind in general, however situate with respect to Government, or whatever Kind of Polity they enjoy; such, in particular, (not to mention all) are the Use of our Bodies, the Exercise of our Reason, the Light of the Sun,

for good Times.

5

Sun, the Benefit of the Air, and the SERM.
Plenty with which the Earth supplies I.
us. These, by the Consent of all Na-
tions in the World, are understood to
be the Gift of Heaven, and consequent-
ly proper Matter of Praise and Thank-
giving, which is what I mean by reli-
gious Joy. To raise our Pleasure and
Delight in these, there is nothing more
required, than to attend to them.
Whenever we do this, if we do not
actually rejoyce in them, we can
have no Pleasure or Satisfaction in our
Being. As to these Blessings, there-
fore, it is enough to leave Men to
the Convictions of their own Hearts
concerning them, which, if they will
but think, will sufficiently suggest how
much Reason they have to return Thanks
to God for them, as necessary, in a
manner, to give Worth and Value to
all the other Blessings he bestows on us.
From these therefore I pass on to con-
sider, in the next Place, those Blessings
which I call Political, arising from the

B 3

Virtues

SERM. Virtues of those, who preside over us,

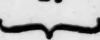
I. and the Forms of Government, under
 { which we live. These also, as they tend
 to promote Peace and Quiet, as well as to
 our living in all Godliness and Hone-
 sty, must be considered as things of the
 highest Moment, and as just Matter of
 Gratitude and Thanksgiving. Since
 therefore there are some, who do not
 seem to know, that it is our Duty to
 delight and take Pleasure in them, I
 shall briefly set forth the Necessity of so
 doing, by suggesting a few Reasons for
 it.

The first that I shall mention, is
 what obliges us to rejoyce in all Kinds
 of Prosperity whatsoever, viz. because
 it is the Gift of God. The Proof of
 this it would be needless to undertake;
 because none will deny, that to God's
 sovereign Direction all human Hap-
 piness, of what Kind soever, must
 be referred, as to its proper Source.
 To him therefore we must give the Glo-
 ry, to him we must return the Thanks:
 And

And particularly with respect to the SERM.
Point now in View, since the Scrip- I.
ture tells us, that *by Him Kings reign,* ~~~~~
and Princes decree Justice, they teach
us in Effect, that for the *Blessings*
of their Reigns, for the *Execution* of
Justice, for the Living under good and
wholsome Laws, for the Peace and Pro-
perity of the Nation, in *which* we live,
and above all, for the Enjoyment of
our *Liberties*, and *Religion*, we are bound
in Duty to *rejoyce in the Lord, and to*
give Thanks to him for a Remembrance of
his Holiness. On the contrary, from the
same Principle it will as evidently ap-
pear, that to murmur and repine in
such Times as these, when Liberty is
enjoyed in as full and ample Manner,
as was ever known in any Nation upon
the Earth; when the Properties of Men
are as well secur'd, as the most jealous
Heart can wish them; when the
Thoughts of Men are not fettered and
confined by the false Establishments of
a superstitious Church, but are indulged

SERM. in as great (if not greater) Scope to
 # I. range at large, and search out for Truth,
 as was ever granted in any Christian
 Country; I say, to murmur and repine
 in such Times as these, to sow the Seeds
 of Discontent in the Minds of our Fel-
 low-Subjects, and to bring an evil Re-
 port on God's Blessings to us, is an un-
 grateful Part with respect to him, and
 a base Attempt to disseminate and spread
 abroad the same Spirit in the Minds
 of others, teaching *them*, in their Turns,
 to withdraw their Gratitude, and de-
 priving them thereby of the most plea-
 sing Exercise in which the Heart of Man
 can be employed. And this I lay down
 as a sufficient Reason, why we ought
 to encourage that religious Joy, with re-
 spect to the Peace and Prosperity of our
 Country, which the Royal Preacher
 in my Text prescribes. But

Secondly, Another Reason, why we
 ought to do this, is, because it is no
 more than a just Debt of Gratitude to
 those, who, *under* God, are his Instru-
 ments

ments and Agents, in conveying these SERM.
 Blessings to us. Little do we know, I.
 in our humble Stations, of the Cares 
 and Troubles which good Princes suffer, while they labour to promote the
 Happiness of their People. But enough
 we know of the *Difficulties* they *encounter*, the Toil and Fatigue they sustain
 for our Sakes, to entitle them to the
 highest Duty and Respect. Reason alone and Common Sense would teach
 us, that this cannot with any Justice be
 withheld. The Rules of Christianity
 confirm their Claim to it. And little
 does he know, either of Reason or Religion, who thinks he may presume on
 any slight Occasion, which either his
 own Jealousy or Resentment may suggest, to call in question the Conduct
 of his lawful Governor, from whose
 tender Care for his People's Liberty, he
 himself derives the Licence to defame
 him. But

Thirdly, Another Reason, why we
 are bound in Duty to testify our Joy in
 the

SERM. the abovementioned Blessings, is, be-

I. cause it is a Debt, which not only our
Superiors, but the Publick also, may, in
Justice, claim. The Zeal, which is
exerted by every private Person, in De-
fence of that Government, which sup-
ports us all, is, in some measure, a Sup-
port to the Government it self, and
tends therefore to the Benefit of the
Whole. As long as the People have no
Jealousy of their Prince, and as long as
the Prince has no private Views, incon-
sistent with the true Interest of his Peo-
ple, this Harmony between both is the
best Security to the Publick, against all
Kinds of Danger, that may arise. He
therefore, who goes about to destroy
that Harmony, by raising needless Je-
alousies in his Fellow-Subjects Minds, is
an Enemy to the publick Peace; He,
on the other hand, who would cultivate
and promote it, is a Friend to the pub-
lick Happiness of his Country, because
he strengthens and supports the Interest
of that Government, from which the
publick

for good Times.

II

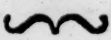
publick Happiness is derived. Since SERM.
therefore it is the Duty of every pri- I.
vate Person to promote, as much as possible, the publick Happiness of his Country, and since this Happiness is most effectually secured by a good Harmony between Prince and People, and since the best Method to promote this Harmony, is, to be pleased with the publick Blessings we enjoy, it must needs be our Duty, on all fit Occasions, not only to rejoyce, but to testify our Joy, to declare the Pleasure and Satisfaction we receive from the Care and Vigilance of those who are set over us, in order to strengthen and support this Harmony, and thereby to promote the Happiness of our Country. How far it is the Duty of Men in publick Characters, to rejoyce, and to bless God, for those Powers and Opportunities which he has given them to do good to others, it is not, *here*, necessary to observe. Be it sufficient, that we practise, in our several Stations, our Duty both to them and him:

SERM. him : Nor suffer our selves to be led a-

I. side by Custom, and by the pestilent
Example, which some Men have given
us, to repine and murmur, instead of
praising and giving Thanks for the pub-
lick Happiness and Prosperity of our
Country. Nor let the little Pleasure,
if any Pleasure it can be to us, of cen-
suring those, whom God bids us honour,
deprive us of the more exquisite, and
more generous Satisfaction of being
pleased with what is meant to please
us. To return Good for *Evil*, is what
the Gospel hath exacted : But to return
Good for Good, is what Nature teaches,
and what, in the common Notions and
Apprehensions of Mankind, it is a Mark
of great Baseness to refuse. Obedience
to *froward* Governors our Religion pres-
ses on us : But to pay our Obedience
to the Good and Gentle, methinks, we
should want no Inviting. To be pati-
ent and submissive is, at all Times, our
Duty : But to be pleased and happy,
when there is nothing to make us other-
wise,

wife, one would think our own Hearts SERM.
should lead us.

I.

I am not ignorant, that the Times 
we live in, have been often represented
in a very different Light. But if Ease
and Affluence, if Liberty and Religion,
if the Security of our Persons, of our
Properties and Estates, may be allowed
as Evidence against such Suggestions,
there is no need to be particular on this
Subject. This is a Kind of Evidence,
which we see and feel, and we must
utterly despair of all other Arguments,
where these can work no Conviction.

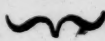
And considering from whose Influ-
ence these Blessings are derived to us,
and in whose Royal Presence I am
speaking, I am not unmindful of a De-
cency to be observed, which must check
me here, and restrain that Zeal, with
which the Heart of a good Man must
naturally overflow, while it dwells on
these pleasing Subjects. I hasten there-
fore to the other Sense of my Text, in
which it may be understood as an Ex-
hortation

SERM. hortation to us to exert our Joy at those

I. Seasons in particular, when any publick
or private Blessing has been conveyed
to us. As to private Blessings, I observed before, that we naturally take Pleasure in them. And I observed withal, that as to publick Blessings, we are less apt to be attentive to them. But how necessary it is, at some certain Seasons, to raise up in our Minds the Remembrance of those Blessings, which are of a more general and publick Nature, the Nation, I have just mentioned, shews. The Backwardness and Aversion, Men are apt to have to the devout Remembrance of God's Favours to them, has occasioned in the Church the Appointment of certain Days, to be constantly observed, as the Year goes round, in Remembrance of several publick Blessings. And surely, if such distant and remote Events, as some of those, which we still commemorate, deserve to be distinguished with such Marks of Honour, as are paid by good Christians

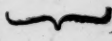
for good Times.

15

Christians to them, much more do SERM.
those Days, to which we are obliged for I.
the present and more immediate Blessings we enjoy, deserve to be marked
out with the highest Tokens of Respect, 
that the most grateful Heart can pay.
Now of all those Days, which do naturally remind us of the publick Happiness and Prosperity of our Country, there is but one Appointed for the Exercise of that Joy, which it is my Business at this Time to recommend. And surely the Loyalty of good and faithful Subjects, the Piety of good Christians, the Gratitude which good Protestants must naturally conceive for the Establishment of their civil and religious Rights, cannot fail to dispose us to take *all* Occasions, and to observe with Pleasure *all* Times and Seasons, that may revive the Memory of such signal Blessings. And of all the Times that may be so employed, what can be more proper, than that auspicious Day, when the Crown was placed on that sacred
Head,

SERM. Head, on which may it ever flourish!

- I. How insensible must we be to our own *greatest* Happiness, how unworthy of the many Blessings we enjoy, if we do not take Occasion, at such a Time as this, to return Thanks to the great Being, who bestows them! Joy and Gladness, and Gratitude to God, are the proper Return, and the only one we can make, for the Continuance of these his Blessings to us. May this Return be made by all, and particularly by those whose Eyes are not open to see their own, and their Country's Happiness! And may those, who do see it, and are joyful in it, rejoyce with such a sober and religious Joy, as may leave no Stings behind it! There is a certain Wildness and Extravagance of Mirth, too apt to be indulged at such happy Seasons, which, instead of raising and elevating the Soul, does but sink it into Shame and Sorrow. *For even in Laughter the Heart is sorrowful, and the End of that Mirth is Heaviness.* For this

this we may take the Royal Preacher's SERM.
Word, who has also said elsewhere of I.
Laughter, it is Madness, and of Mirth, 
what doth it? What doth it, but de-
ceive and seduce the Heart, and betray
us into Sin and Folly? It is not there-
fore that tumultuous Joy, which is apt
to oppress and overwhelm the Soul, and
to drown all the Faculties of Reason;
but it is that sedate and sober Pleasure,
that rational Delight which a good Man
feels, from the Sense of God's Favour
to him, which the Royal Preacher in
my Text prescribes. Joy is, at best,
but a dissolute and wanton, an unna-
tural and unbecoming Quality, when it
has not Virtue for its Foundation and
Support. And even when it *has*, it is apt
to betray that Virtue, by rendering us in-
attentive to our Duty. For indeed, we
are never so much off our Guard, ne-
ver so much exposed to the Power of
Temptation, as when we are gratifying
that giddy Passion. To arm us there-
fore against the ill Effects of it, and to

18 *The Duty of Rejoycing, &c.*

SERM. fill our Hearts with a well-grounded Joy,
 I. by rendering us proper Objects of those
 publick Blessings, which as on this Day
 were conferred upon us, let us, first,
 resolve, (if it is not yet done) to season
 our Hearts with a true Gratitude to God
 for these, and all his other Benefits: And
 let us declare the inward Gratitude of
 our Hearts, by the outward Testimony
 of Praise and Thanksgiving. Let us ani-
 mate and enflame each others Souls with
 a true Zeal for the Honour of our King,
 and for the Peace and Prosperity of our
 Country; But, lastly, let us not in the
 mean time forget to fortify and prepare
 against those Temptations to which
 the Transport of our Joy may lead us.
 Thus guarded and secured, thus sancti-
 fied and improved, the Joy we now
 feel, may be a good Presage of a long
 Series of Blessings *here*, and, what is much
 more, may confirm our Hope of that
 Joy, which we expect hereafter.

*Which God of his infinite Mercy
 grant, &c.*

Self-



*Self-Love the best Motive to
Religion.*

A

S E R M O N

Preached before the

K I N G at Hampton-Court,
October 21, 1733.

P S A L M xix. 11.

--- *And in keeping of them there is great
Reward.*



HERE are no Sorts of Ar-
gument more likely to affect
us, than those which concern
our Interest; this being a
Point which, so far as we understand it,

C 2

we

SERM. we seldom fail, with great Attention,

II. to pursue. The Misfortune is, that
 { we very frequently mistake it, and are
 apt to embrace That as our greatest Interest, which in Truth is very far from being so: And this Want of Judgment is in nothing more remarkable, than in preferring things sensual, and of a short Existence, to those things which are both spiritual and eternal.

The Scripture therefore, which was designed to lay before us both the Rule of Duty, and the best Motives to enforce it, abounds with Exhortations to the Practice of Religion from the Consideration of the Rewards annex to it. And good Reason was there for insisting on this Topick, since all other Arguments must be utterly invalid, unless, some Way or other, they are made to terminate in this. Self-Love is a Principle so inseparable from our Nature, and which operates with so much Force upon it, that no Motive or Inducement, of what Kind soever, can stand
 in

in Competition with it. It is always, SERM.
more or less, how invisible soever, at II.
the Bottom of every Action we perform. ~~~~~
Even those, which are most disinterest-
ed, if pursued to their Fountain-head,
will be discovered to have sprung from
this. Every Virtue we can practise,
however secret and recluse, how little
soever it may aim at Glory, or any Re-
compense or Return from Men, has
still some Motive, which, if well exam-
ined, will center in this Principle of
Self-Love. For whether we are actua-
ted by the Hope of Heaven, which is
a Principle, which is profest by Christi-
ans, or whether we are moved to per-
form virtuous Actions by the mere
Pleasure and Delight we take in them,
in either of these Cases, the Principle of
Self-Love is evidently the sole Motive
on which we act: He that is influen-
ced by present Pleasure, being certainly
as much under the Direction of Self-
Love, as he that has a future Recom-
pense in View.

SERM. From hence it may be remarked,

II. how absurdly it has been suggested, that
the Spirit of Christianity is too mean and mercenary to proceed from its great Author, God. For on what other Principle will you find a Motive to the Practice of moral Duty? Take away the Profit or the Pleasure you reap from it, both which are, alike, mercenary and selfish, and what have you left, on any other Principle, that can move you to perform virtuous Actions? The Fitness, it may be said perhaps, or the Reasonableness of the Thing. But does Fitness or Reasonableness lay you under a Constraint? Are you absolutely obliged, by a Physical Necessity, to do every thing that you think fit and reasonable? No, surely: For if so, there would be no Vice; since every Man in this Case would be necessarily constrained to do every thing, that he thought consonant to Reason. What Principle is it, then, that we must suppose to move us to comply with what Reason dictates? Is it

it not the Pleasure and Delight it yields? SERM.
the Complacence and Satisfaction, that II.
a Man feels within him, in acting up
to the Dignity of his Nature? And
what is this, but another Name for
Self-Love?

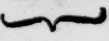
The same Answer will recur, if instead of Fitness or Reasonableness, we substitute the Name of Comeliness, or Beauty, or Harmony, or Order, or Proportion, or whatever else has been used by Writers of refined Taste and Genius, to imbellish and adorn moral Virtue. For what are all these but different Images and Allusions, derived from the Impressions of the several Objects of Sense, and applied (perhaps with great Beauty and Propriety, but to no Manner of Purpose, that I can see) to Virtue? For if Virtue be indeed (and who can say it is not?) so very amiable, as by these Metaphors it is described, where is the Disinterestedness of pursuing it for its own Sake? Surely, the more amiable any Object is,

SERM. the more there is of Self-Love in the

II. Pursuit of it. This Notion therefore
is not only against Us, but even against
those, who have advanced it. For how
is it less mercenary to be allured to Vir-
tue by the present Pleasure and Delight
it yields, than by the Prospect of a fu-
ture Recompense from God? If it be
wrong in Christians to have an Eye to
the Reward, in the Practice of any Gos-
pel-Duty, it is wrong also in them,
in the Practice of moral Virtue, to have
Regard to any Pleasure it may afford:
Or if right in them to accept a present
Recompense, it is right also in Christi-
ans to rely on God's Promise, and to
wait patiently for a better Recompense
hereafter.

But perhaps it will be said, It is not
Fitness or Reasonableness, or the Beau-
ty and attractive Influence of Virtue,
but the Will of God alone, the Autho-
rity of our Creator, on which the Ob-
ligation to moral Virtue stands. Let
this be allowed. But what shall we get
by

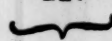
by it? Does the Will of God unavoid- SERM.
ably constrain us to act constantly in II.

Obedience to it? No more, than the 
Fitness or Reasonableness of Things.

How then does it act on us? What
is there, that can induce us to act in
Obedience to God's Will at all? His
Power, will you say? or the Fear of
Vengeance from him? But this is the
very Principle you oppose. You will
not allow us to live in Fear of Hell,
because it is an abject Principle: Why
then in Fear of Punishment in general?
Will it be said, Gratitude is sufficient
to engage us? For it is but reasonable,
that he who gave us Being, should re-
ceive from us all Tokens of Respect.
It is true, this is reasonable: But why
should we follow Reason? I mean, on
the Principle which is advanc'd against
us. To follow Reason, is a mercena-
ry thing; forasmuch as it carries its
Reward along with it, in the high Plea-
sure and Satisfaction, which it affords.
Gratitude, in particular, to the great

Author

SERM. Author of our Being, is one of the most

II.  pleasing and delightful Exercises, in which the Mind of Man can be employed. In this, and in the Contemplation of his all-glorious Nature, will probably consist our chief Happiness hereafter; and therefore it is no wonder, if, imperfect as it is, there is some Degree of Pleasure in it here; so much at least, as may sufficiently convince us, that it is not a Thing so very destitute of Reward, as, it seems, some would fain imagine it to be. In short, if you will needs set aside Rewards, and put us beyond the Reach of Punishment, I would ask, What can possibly induce us to be thus grateful, but the mere Pleasure and Delight we take in it? And does not this bring us back to Self-Love again? For what can be a stronger Indication of it, than choosing to do that, which is most agreeable to our selves, and which tends most to give us Pleasure and Delight? Consider things in what Light you please, take
your

your own Hypothesis, be it what you will, and still you will find, if you pursue it to the utmost, you will stand in need of this Principle to support it. SERM. II.

But if this be admitted, what becomes of Friendship? What becomes of those generous and *humane* Affections, which prompt us to perform Actions of Beneficence and Compassion, and to postpone our own Interest to that of others? Are these derived all from the Principle of Self-Love? As sure, as any Action we perform. For what is there dissonant, or contradictory to Reason, in supposing such Actions to be performed by Christians, in Expectation of some Recompense to be received? But let it be supposed, that such Acts as these, have no Respect to any future Recompense. Is there, then, no Pleasure, or Satisfaction, in them? I appeal to those, whose indulgent Hearts incline them to such Acts of Mercy. Do they not lighten and unload the Soul of that Burden, which Compassion lays on it? Do they
not

SERM. not fill it with transporting Pleasure,

II. which nothing else but such Sentiments
— can inspire? And is not this the very Motive, which inclines them so to act, and for want of which others fail to act so? Be it therefore the mere Spirit of Humanity and Compassion, or be it the Sense of having done our Duty, or whatever else it be, that gives this Delight to us, as long as we are prompted and impelled by this to any Act of Beneficence or Compassion, we can resolve it into no Principle, but Self-Love.

In gratifying this, we may sacrifice indeed, our lesser and inferior Interests to those of others. But the Reason must be, because we take Delight in performing such Acts of Mercy. Let any Man that does them, but consult his Heart, and consider, what Motives or Inducements he has to do them; and he will find, the Reason is, that they are pleasing to himself, or else, that he thinks they will be acceptable to God, by whom he will be rewarded for them.

The

The greatest Objection that seems to SERM. lie against this, may be drawn from II. those Instances of Heroick Friendship, in which Men would have died willingly for their Friends. But 'even in these Instances, if considered rightly, we shall find there may be a great Mixture of Self-love. For the Proof of which, not to urge that all Friendship is originally contracted by both Parties that engage in it, not for the Sake of each other, but themselves (for the natural Aversion we all have to Solitude, the Advantages we reap from a Confidence in each other, the mutual Succour and Assistance we receive from it, and above all, the peculiar Satisfaction of being loved by those, whose moral Qualities we admire, none of which can be denied to be a selfish Principle, are the true Fountains, from which Friendship springs:) but I say, not to urge, or insist on this, it appears from the very End and Design of Self-love, which is a natural Instinct that God has planted
in

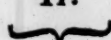
SERM. in us, to preserve us from Danger, by

II. making every Creature as safe as possible in the Custody of himself, that it cannot be rivalled or overcome by Friendship, or by any other Principle whatsoever. If it could, it would not answer the wise End of Providence, which was, to preserve the whole Species from Destruction, by causing every Creature to be careful of his own Safety, and to prefer his own Interest to that of others. When therefore we meet, in History, with Accounts of such Persons as would willingly have died each for other, tho' *greater Love than this hath been shown by no Man*, yet even from these Instances we must not presently conclude, that Self-love had no Influence upon them. For if he who did this, were not moved to do it by the sudden Transports of Romantick Passion (in which Case no Inference can be made from it) but by the cool and sober Dictates of his Reason, who can tell on what Principle he might act?
Who

Who knows, but the Prospect of his SERM.
own desolate Condition, when he should II.
have lost in a Friend the chief Comfort
of his Life, the Fear of being destitute,
afflicted, and forsaken, might be the
chief Inducement to lay down his Life?
Who knows how far the Love of Glo-
ry might inspire him, or the Prospect
of a better Recompense, possibly refer-
ved in some future State, for such an
Instance of Heroick Love? Friendship,
it is certain, in Heathen Systems of Mo-
rality, was treated among the Moral
Virtues. Fortitude, or Magnanimity
and Contempt of Danger, was esteemed
a Moral Virtue too. In consequence
of these Principles, to a Man who thought
himself at Liberty to deprive himself of
Life at Pleasure, as in the Heathen
World many did, what could seem a
more generous or heroick Action, than
to lay it down for the Preservation of
his Friend? or what could seem to such
a Man to give a better Title to a great
and ample Recompense hereafter?

But

SERM. But whether this, or the Love of

II.  Glory, or the Fear of losing what they held so dear, and on which much of their present Happiness depended, was the Motive which gave Birth to such Acts as these; as long as any possible Account can be given of them, consistent with this Principle of Self-Love, nothing can be inferred from these Instances against it. It is a Principle of such a Nature, that if it operates at all, it must needs triumph over all that can oppose it, being planted for this Purpose in us; nor can any Man, unless he be disordered in his Understanding, or under the Impulse of ungovernable Passion, act wilfully and deliberately against it, in Points, which concern his most important Interests.

If in what has been said, I may be thought by any to have put Moral Virtue on too low a Foot, I can only say, that I have endeavoured to represent it, as it seems to exist really in Nature; not as it is drest up by Men of Parts
and

and Genius, who derive human Acti-^{SERM.}
ons from fine speculative Principles, II.
beautiful in Idea, and very fit to be ad-
mired, but much too refined for Prac-
tice. The Love of our selves, by the
great Abuse of it, is, it seems, grown
so odious to us, that we cannot bear to
find the best Actions we perform should
be derived from so corrupt a Source.
Hereupon we set our selves to work on
the Discovery of some Principle less de-
rogating from the Dignity of our Na-
ture, that we may seem to have greater
and more sublime Conceptions, to be
moved by more generous and disinter-
ested Affections, and to act upon bet-
ter Principles than other Men. But
the great Absurdity in the mean time
is this, that while in Speculation we
amuse our Fancies with the Notion of
being acted by such noble Views, we
are still governed by the same Motives
with other Men. We still continue to
be swayed by Self-love, and perhaps by
Self-love not sufficiently instructed what,

SERM. indeed, is the true Interest it should pur-

II. sue. He that would see this, must look
beyond the Grave; and there he will find that, which, if he loves himself, will be a standing Motive in all Circumstances and Conditions, to practise the greatest and most exalted Virtues: And that is much more, than can be expected from him, who shuts himself out from this glorious Prospect, who rejects the noble Views and precious Promises of the Gospel, relying on Principles, which, in Times of hard Trial, he will find to be but *broken Reeds*. In short, let the Hope of a future Recompenſe be admitted, and immediately Self-love, directing us to pursue That, directs us to all Kinds of Virtue. But take away this, and from that very Instant Self-love takes a different Turn, teaching us to pursue That, which, in this present Life, will afford us the greatest Pleasure and Delight. If Virtue will do this, as indeed it often will, so far, on this Principle, it may be followed.

followed. But when once it comes to SERM.
thwart and oppose our Passions, when II.
it robs us of our Pleasure, when it bids us
refuse or forsake any thing, that we love,
what have we to support us then? Self-
love, which should help us out, has taken
Arms against us, and, since we despair
of any future Recompense, advises us
to pursue present Pleasure. In vain
shall Reason, or any other Principle, in-
terpose in this Case to save us. No-
thing can persuade us to make the least
Resistance, till Self-love shall change
Sides again: Till instead of the low
Pleasures and Satisfactions of Sin, we
discover something in Virtue more wor-
thy our Pursuit, as abounding with
greater and more sublime Enjoyments,
and as tending more to the final Hap-
piness of Man.

The Reason, why this may be re-
ceived with Prejudice, is, because we
are accustomed to consider Self-love, as
a thing opposite to all Religion and Vir-
tue. And such, indeed, in some In-

SERM. stances it proves, not because the Prin-

II. ciple is it self defective, or insufficient
 ~~~~~ to support Piety and Virtue, but because the Nature of our Interest is misjudged. When we wilfully violate and transgress God's Laws, it is not, surely, because we love our selves better, than we do when we strictly keep them; but because we make a foolish and imprudent Choice, we pursue our Happiness by such Ways and Methods, as tend to make us miserable for ever. The Reason why we sin, is, because we love our selves, and the Reason of our being virtuous, is the same. In one Case only, we are directed by our Reason, in the other by some headstrong Passion. In one we pursue a real, a solid, and substantial, in the other, a short, fleeting Happiness. But in neither of these Cases do we mean Harm to our selves: For the Principle of Self-love is so twisted and interwoven with every other Principle of our Nature, that it cannot fail, either mediately, or immediately,



to affect us in every moral Action we SERM. perform. And from hence it is plain, II. that those, who reproach Christians with acting on a mean and unworthy Principle, in *having Respect to the recompense of the Reward*, must either be content to withdraw that Censure, or else take the Shame of being influenced to Virtue by a mean and unworthy Principle themselves.

Let therefore the eternal Reasons and Relations of Things, or let the Will of God, be the *Rule* of Duty; for, as such, they differ only in their Name: But as Motives, or Inducements; as Ties, or Obligations; let them take into Partnership this Principle of Self-love, without which they will lose all their Influence. Let us not be ashamed in the Practice of our Duty, to act on such Principles, as God has planted in us, nor with such Views, as he proposes to us. Let us raise the Love of God to as great a Height as we can: And who can raise it higher, than

SERM. he, who stedfastly believes that Mystery

II. of Divine Love, which was unfolded in  
 { the Gospel, *viz.* our Redemption from  
 eternal Death? Let us cherish and indulge  
 the most benevolent Affections towards  
 God's Creature, and *our* Brother, Man.  
 For who can do it better, than he who  
 sets before him, together with all other  
 Motives and Engagements, the Example  
 as well as Precept, of a crucified Re-  
 deemer? But let us, in the mean time,  
 think it no Reproach, to keep in view  
 the precious Promises, which the Gospel  
 makes to us, of *an Inheritance, incorrup-  
 tible, undefiled, reserved in the Heavens  
 for us*; nor imagine it a Disparagement  
 to God's Holy Laws, that they need to  
 be enforced by the Argument in my  
 Text, that *in keeping of them there is  
 great Reward.*

*Now to God the Father, &c.*



*The separate Interests of this World  
and the next reconciled.*

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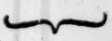
# S E R M O N

On C O L. iii. 2.

*Set your Affection on Things above, not  
on Things on the Earth.*



THE separate Interests of this SERM.  
World and the next, make III.  
Man a very fickle Being. As ~~~~~  
he is compounded of two different Principles, one of them devoted to the Concerns of this World, and the other looking forward to Eternity, it is no Wonder to see him varying his Purposes, as this or that Principle  
D 4 has

SERM. has the Ascendant. There are some indeed so steadily religious, and others so  
 III.  profligate and abandoned, that they seem to have but one Principle to direct them. But the greatest Part of us are wavering and irresolute; sometimes misled by the Blandishments of Sense, and at other times reclaim'd by Reason; so that our Lives are checquer'd with Vice and Virtue, and divided between Sin and Repentance.

Now the Cause of this disorderly Variety in our Actions, is evidently the misplacing of our Affections. If we would but suffer them to be conducted by Reason, we should never feel such a Conflict within our selves from the Remonstrances of that busy Monitor: We should be secur'd from all Levity and Error, and consequently from all Sorrow and Disappointment: We should be taught not to look for substantial Happiness, where no substantial Happiness can be found; or, in other Words, we should be taught, as we are taught



*World and the next reconciled.* 41

in my Text, to *set our Affection on* SERM.  
*Things above, not on Things upon the* III.  
*Earth.* ~~~~~

Reason, I say, could she speak for her self, would give us the very same Advice with the Apostle. And 'tis pity therefore, that such excellent Advice should meet with such an ill Reception. But as the sensual Man doth not well consider it, so the superstitious doth not understand it. Neither of them obeys the Precept, as he ought: Tho' the former offends knowingly and wilfully, and the latter out of Ignorance and Mistake. One of them receives the Precept like a stubborn Enemy, the other like a ceremonious Friend: And accordingly one treats it with Contempt and Aversion, the other with too much Respect. To be plain; the sensual Man refuses to comply with the Command, lest it should rob him of his *unlawful* Pleasures: And the superstitious adheres so strictly to the Letter of it, that he loses even those Pleasures which  
are

## 42 *The separate Interests of this*

SERM. are lawful: Whereas were the Design  
 III. of the Apostle understood, the Libertine might have the truest Satisfaction that this World affords, without deserting the Interests of the next; and the Devotee might have all the spiritual Ecstasy he desires, without sequestering himself from his Business or his Pleasures. In a Word, the latter might be convinced, as great a Paradox as it seems, that a Christian may in some Sense be a Man of Pleasure; and the former persuaded of what is as great a Paradox to *him*, that there's no Man of Pleasure, like the Christian.

Now all this will most evidently appear, by considering the three following Propositions.

I. First, that whatever is meant by this Precept of the Apostle, or any other of the same *Nature* in Holy Writ, it can never be understood to prohibit that Attention to the Concerns of this present World, which is necessary to our Well-being in it.

Nor

*World and the next reconciled.* 43

Nor, Secondly, can it be suppos'd to SERM.  
exclude us from the Enjoyment of those III.  
innocent Delights, which Nature has  
pour'd out about us.

But Thirdly and Lastly, That, so far  
as is consistent with the necessary Busi-  
ness and the innocent Delights of Life,  
*it is no less our Interest, than our Duty*  
to set our Affections on things above.

First I say, that whatever is meant by  
this Precept of the Apostle, or any other  
of the same Nature in Holy Writ, it can  
never be understood to prohibit that  
Attention to the Concerns of this pre-  
sent World, which is necessary to our  
Well-being in it. To provide for our  
own Security, is indeed as much required  
of us as any other Act of Duty. Self-  
Preservation is a Moral Principle, and  
as such we are oblig'd to comply with  
it. Luxury and Intemperance, and all  
that Tribe of Vices, by which we are  
said to sin against our selves, are none  
of them any otherwise criminal, than  
as they offend against this inviolable  
Law.

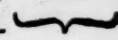
## 44 *The separate Interests of this*

SERM. LAW. For the same Reason all Neg-  
 III. lects and Omissions, by which we are  
 wanting to our own Security, are, in  
 Proportion to their Importance, Sins.  
 Besides this, there are many other Du-  
 ties arising from the several Relations  
 we stand in, none of which can be  
 practis'd, as they ought, without an  
 Attention to the Business of the World.  
 So that to abandon the Society of Man-  
 kind, and immure our selves in Cells  
 and Cloisters, as it is taught and prac-  
 tised in Popish Countries, under Pretence  
 of setting our Affections on Things a-  
 bove, is so far from being the Duty of  
 a Christian, that, as long as the Health  
 of our Bodies and the Strength of our  
 Minds enable us to be useful in ano-  
 ther Way, it is a downright Desertion  
 of our Duty; a devout Lethargy, a spi-  
 ritual Repose, agreeable neither to Grace  
 nor Nature. In our natural State we  
 were form'd for Action, and Christia-  
 nity has introduc'd no new Duty surely,  
 inconsistent with the Laws of Nature.

We



*World and the next reconciled.* 45

We are told indeed, that if we *seek the* SERM.  
*Kingdom of God and his Righteousness,* III.  
*every thing, we want beside, shall be ad-*   
*ded unto us.* But this Promise it self

supposes we have no Hope of God's  
Succour and Protection, without the  
Concurrence of our own Endeavours.

For why should we be commanded to  
*seek the Kingdom of God first*, and prin-  
cipally, if there were not some other  
secondary Pursuit? And what can that  
secondary Pursuit be, but the Concerns  
of this present Life? *Let our Conversa-*  
*tion therefore be in Heaven*, if you will;  
but let us not forget we are upon Earth.  
For if *we* do, we may be sure *others*  
will not. There will be always some,  
who have the Wisdom of the Serpent,  
to take Advantage of our Holy Sloth-  
fulness, and while we think we are lay-  
ing up *for our selves Treasures in Hea-*  
*ven*, amass to themselves the Riches of  
the Earth, which might have been pos-  
sessed, and employed by *us* in the neces-  
sary Works of Christian Charity, for the  
Relief

46 *The separate Interests of this*

SERM. Relief of our needy Brethren. In a

III. Word, while those who have another  
 ~~~~~ World at Heart, employ their whole  
 Time and Thoughts in Raptures of Seraphick Love, the Wicked will lay
 Snares to entrap the Innocent, and the
 State of Religion, and of the World
 in general, will be the worse for their
 particular Devotion.

I say not this to check the Love of
 God, which can never be enough com-
 mended. But I say it in Opposition
 to those Zealots, who place Religion in
 retiring from the World, and despising
 all Persons in it: Whereas a chearful
 and regular Obedience, in the more ac-
 tive Scenes of Life, is as much superior
 to this fullen Sanctity, as the Good of
 Mankind is a nobler View, than one's
 own particular Interest or Advantage.
 A generous and beneficent Spirit seeks
 Occasions of doing good to others;
 whereas in this recluse and monastick
 State, our Virtues are purely negative.
 'Tis the utmost Perfection of this Or-
 der

World and the next reconciled. 47

der of Men, not willingly to do Mis-
chief to any one.

SERM.
III.

But, Secondly, as this Precept of the
Apostle is not meant to prohibit all
Attention to the Business of the World,
so neither can it be supposed to exclude
us from the Enjoyment of those inno-
cent Delights, which Nature has pour'd
out about us.

It cannot be denied, that at some
certain Seasons, to mortify our corrupt
Affections, or to humble our selves be-
fore an offended God, it may be pro-
per and even necessary to abstain from
the Enjoyment of our lawful Pleasures.
But it is a mean and unworthy Notion
of the supreme Being, to suppose he
takes Delight in Misery. The contra-
ry is not only deducible from his At-
tributes, but so visible even in all his
Works, that nothing but the ground-
less Terrors of the Superstitious, who
thought him *altogether such a one as*
themselves, could have induc'd them to
entertain that Thought. *The merciful*
and

SERM. *and gracious Lord hath so done his mar-*

III. *vellous Works, that they ought to be had*
in Remembrance. And how can they be

remembred better, than by contemplating them with Pleasure and Complacence? It must needs be either Guilt or Ignorance, that can cause us to survey the Beauties of the Creation without being sensibly affected. They were made to strike our Senses with Delight, and if they have not this Effect, the Design of Nature is defeated. It is for this Reason they are ever tempting and solliciting us, and till we can divest ourselves of all our Senses, which were purposely adapted to the Enjoyment of them, we cannot be indifferent or inattentive. No imaginable Reason can be given, why they are form'd with so much Symmetry and Order, but for the Delight and Entertainment of *us Men the Sovereigns of this lower World.* And indeed to behold them with a chearful Heart, is in some Sort an Act of Gratitude. 'Tis rejoycing in him *who made them,*

World and the next reconciled. 49

them, as we cannot but do with the SERM.
most unfeigned Sincerity, when we con- III.
sider him as their great Author and Sup-
port. Who can enumerate that Varie-
ty of Entertainments, which lies scat-
ter'd about the visible Creation? Or
what can we say to that preposterous
Devotion, which takes a Pride in be-
holding them with Indifference? There
is such a Thing as a religious Melancho-
ly, a certain peevish Solemnity of Tem-
per, consisting in an habitual Dispositi-
on to be out of Humour with every
thing on this Side Heaven. You are
to understand the Person infected with
this Distemper, to be far gone towards
another World, and to have such vio-
lent Foretastes of the Joys of Heaven,
as to have no Relish for any Pleasure
upon Earth. But surely it must needs
be a more religious, as well as a more
happy Temper, to be pleas'd as much
as possible, with every thing. This is
certainly no ways inconsistent with the
harsh'est and severest Precepts of the Gos-

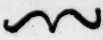
50 *The separate Interests of this*

SERM. pel. We are commanded indeed *to*

III. *take up our Cross*; but we are no where
 commanded to seek it out: We are to
 bear all the Calamities, that fall to our
 Share; but not to load our selves with
 unnecessary Evils. We are neither to
 decline, nor court Adversity: If it is
 thrown into our Lap, we must bear it
 patiently: If not, we may enjoy the
 Blessings of Providence; provided it be
 done with Temper and Moderation,
 with an humble Sense of our own Un-
 worthiness, *and without forgetting the*
Hand that gave them. And this leads
 me to consider in the

Third and last Place, That, so far as
 is consistent with the necessary Business
 and the innocent Delights of Life, it is
 no less our Interest, than our Duty, *to*
set our Affection on Things above. And
 surely if any thing in this World de-
 serves our Love, much more does the
 most bounteous Author of every thing
 that is good and amiable. He gave us
 not only those Objects of Delight,
 which

World and the next reconciled. 51

which affect *us* with such an exquisite SERM.
Pleasure, but likewise the very Capacity III.
of receiving that Pleasure, and the Dis- 
position to be delighted with it. He
therefore should be *the principal, if not*
the sole Object of our Affection; and be-
cause the Passions are apt to follow,
which ever way the Senses lead them,
and consequently 'tis not so easy to
place our Affections upon a spiritual
and incorporeal Being, as upon one of
the same Nature with our selves, it
would be well therefore, if we would
endeavour to bring down this glorious
Object to the Level of our own Capa-
cities, or at least to raise our selves to
some faint Idea of his infinite Perfecti-
ons, by surveying him with the Eye of
Reason. By this means we shall disco-
ver, how much we have been obliged
to his Goodness, and how much we
depend upon his Power: How much
Reason we have to praise him for Fa-
vours past, and to trust in him for those
which are to come. Love and Joy,

52 *The separate Interests of this*

SERM. and Hope and Gratitude, and all the

III. *Tribe of the most exalted Passions,*
 which can rise in the Heart of Man,
 will find Room to exert themselves on
 this single Object. How must the Ima-
 gination swell with the Idea of that
 great and awful Being, which *even the*
Heaven, and Heaven of Heavens, is not
able to contain! And how must it break
 out into Ecstasies of Thanksgiving, when
 we consider our selves intitled, by the
 Blood of our Redeemer, *to an Inheri-*
tance incorruptible and undefiled, reserved
in those Heavens for us! Where can we
 find a Subject for our Meditation upon
 the Surface of this earthly Globe, which
 deserves to be put in Competition with
 these great and sublime Meditations?
 How mean is Wealth and Honour,
 Birth, Title, Place or Power, nay how
 mean is human Wisdom it self, com-
 par'd with these celestial Treasures!
 Thus saith the Lord: *Let not the wise*
Man glory in his Wisdom, neither let the
mighty Man glory in his Might: Let not
the

World and the next reconciled. 53

the rich Man glory in his Riches: But SERM.
let him that glorieth, glory in this, that III.
he understandeth and knoweth me, that I ~~~~~
am the Lord, which exercise loving Kind-
ness, Judgment and Righteousness in the
Earth. For in these things I delight, saith
the Lord.

But lastly, another Reason why we should set our Affections on things above, is, that we may be superior to the little Casualties and Disasters that happen in this lower World. A Mind that is wholly bent upon Immortality, contracts all its Views and Wishes, with respect to the Concerns of this transient Scene, into a very narrow Compass. Fortune has no Power over it. Every Moment of Pleasure is enjoy'd; and every Moment of Pain is cheated away by the Prospect of a blessed Immortality. From a Heart so fortified as this, came that noble Resolution in the Prophet *Habakkuk*. *Altho' the Fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall Fruit be in the Vines, the Labour of the Olive shall fail,*

54 *The separate Interests of this*

SERM. *and the Fields shall yield no Meat, the*

III. *Flock shall be cut off from the Fold, and*

there shall be no Herd in the Stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my Salvation. Such is the

Spirit of every true Christian, when he is *tried* in the Furnace of Affliction.

The setting our Affections on things above, causes all Difficulties and Hardships to disappear. The Love of God

is the vital Principle, which animates and gives Vigour to our Devotion.

Without this, the outward Exercise of Religion will be not only a fruitless and unprofitable, but a very toilsome and uneasy Task.

We see in the ordinary Concerns of Life, how the Principle of Love prevails. With how much Ease

are all Difficulties surmounted, which oppose our Passage to what we earnestly desire! Who would not risque even

Life it self for the Sake of what he dearly loves? And on the contrary, how ill

are all Offices perform'd, that are undertaken at first upon Compulsion, and

executed

World and the next reconciled. 55

executed with Unwillingness and Re-SERM.
gret! In vain does Reason prompt us III.

forward, if our Affections do not se-
cond and support it. And if they *do*,
no Danger can discourage us, no Op-
position baffle and repulse us. What
else is the Reason, that so many holy
Martyrs have, from time to time, with
so much Chearfulness of Heart, suffer'd
Death for the Sake of Christ; while
others, whose Affections were less infla-
med, have deserted the common Duties
of Christianity, as too rigorous, and
too difficult to be born? Whereas the
Difficulty is not in the Duty it self, but
in the Spirit of him, who is to practise
it. And the Reason why so many Pro-
fessors of Religion start back and shame
their Calling, is, that their Hearts are
not affected with a Sense of Gratitude,
and *their Labour proceedeth not of Love.*

To conclude; since it is our Duty
so to divide our Time betwixt this
World and the next, as to be wanting
to the Concerns of neither; let every

56 *The separate Interests of this*

SERM. one, after he has studied his Temper,
 III. set a Guard upon his own particular
 Frailty. I believe there is no great Reason to suspect, that any of us think too much of another World. However, if there be any one, who thinks he has set his Affections on things above, merely because he has withdrawn them from the Earth, let him carefully search and examine his own Heart, to see whether he does not mistake his own Sullenness and Moroseness, or his own Spleen and Ill-nature for Religion. If there be any who thinks himself only innocently chearful, let him take heed, lest his Gaiety of Heart insensibly withdraw him from the Thoughts of another World, and enslave him to the Delights of this.

In general, let us all examine what particular Pleasures upon Earth are most apt to engage our Affections, and at what Seasons they are most apt to solicit us. Against them let us employ all our Skill, that they may not so command

World and the next reconciled. 57

mand and engross our Thoughts, as to SERM.
make us negligent of the one thing III.
needful. With this Caution the Inter-
ests of both Worlds may be united :
We may set our Affections on another,
without losing the Conveniences of
this, and we may live with Chearfulness
and Pleasure here, without forfeiting our
Inheritance hereafter.

Now to God, &c.



The



*The Necessity of well Husband-
ing our Time.*

A

S E R M O N

Preached before the HOUSEHOLD.

P S A L M XC. 12.

*So teach us to number our Days, that we
may apply our Hearts unto Wisdom.*

SERM.
IV.



THE Use that I would make
of these Words at present, is,
to introduce a Subject which
may be profitably conside-
red, *viz.* The well husbanding and
improving of our Time.

The

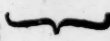
The Necessity of well, &c. 59

The Shortness and Uncertainty of SERM.
human Life is a thing, that has been IV.
much complained of: And therefore
there is no need to go about to
prove it, since we all own and la-
ment the Truth of it. To persuade
Men to make a proper Use of this Know-
ledge, is indeed a much harder Task:
And for this Cause it was that the Ho-
ly Psalmist, conscious of our Weakness
in this Respect, thought fit to apply to
Heaven for the Cure of it, praying to
God, that he would *teach us so to num-
ber our Days, i. e.* so to consider and
lay to Heart how short our Time is,
*that we may apply our Hearts to the tru-
est Wisdom,* by preparing for a better
State. The way to do this (if we de-
sign to do it, and if we do not, we
are certainly in a very dangerous Con-
dition) is, to sit down and seriously con-
sider with our selves, in what manner
we have spent our Time, what Profit
we have gained, what Losses we have
suffered; what Improvements we have
made

SERM. made in Virtue, what Progress in Vice, and

IV. in what Respects we are better or worse
— Christians, than we were when our Lives began. It is not very easy to point out the Particulars, of which this Enquiry should consist; these being as various and different from each other, as the Circumstances and Conditions of Men. One Man has met with Crosses and Disappointments, another with Prosperity and Success: One has been afflicted with Pain and Sickness, another has enjoy'd Health and Strength: One has been pining under Want and Poverty, another has been fill'd with Plenty: One has had many Opportunities to do good, another has had few or none; and in Proportion to the Difference of Men's Circumstances in these Respects, the Articles of their Enquiry will be somewhat different too. However, that we may not enter upon this necessary Work without some Kind of Method to direct us, I shall take upon me to lay down a few General Rules for

Husbanding our Time. 61

for our Conduct in this Respect, after SERM.
having premised, that in all Enquiries IV.
of this Nature we must take with us 
these following Cautions.

I. That *that* is really no Profit or Advantage, which sets us forward in the Affairs of this World, and at the same time sets us backward in the Accounts we are to make at the Judgment-Seat of Christ.

II. That *that* is really no Loss, which is so only with respect to this World, provided it helps us forward in those Articles of Enquiry, which shall be made at the Great Day of Judgment.

III. That therefore in all our Business and Employments, in all our Dealings and Transactions with each other, we ought to have an Eye to that final Hearing, which will make us happy or miserable for ever. And therefore

IV. That to abound with this World's Good, and at the same Time to be poor in Grace, is in Truth the worst Husbandry in the World, since
all

SERM. all that exceeds our own necessary Occasions, was given us for the Sake of others, to enable us, by providing for the Relief of their Wants, to lay up for our selves a Reversion of Happiness, which this World cannot give.

This being premised, I proceed to lay before you a few general Directions, by which we may be enabled so to balance our Accounts, as to improve the Time to come to our spiritual Advantage, by looking back on what has happened in the past. The First is,

I. To compare the good Offices we have done, with the Opportunities we have had to do them. It is not the Good that is done by Us, compared with what is done by others, but compared with the Power and Ability we have to do it, that will justify us in the Sight of God. This we are taught by the Parable of the Widow, whose Mite, we are told, was as well accepted, as the rich Offerings of her wealthy Neighbours. And indeed it would be no equitable or fair Proceeding, to expect the
same

same Improvement from him, who SERM.
has but few, as from him, who has IV.
many Talents. This would be utter-
ly inconsistent with that Maxim of
common Justice, which is urged by
our blessed Lord himself: *That to whom-
soever much is given, of him much shall
be required; and to whom Men have com-
mitted much, of him they will ask the more.*

But though all Men are not blessed
with the same Means and Opportunities,
yet most Men have some Power to do
Good. And the less Power we have,
the more careful should we be not to
lose any Occasion of exerting it. For
in Proportion to our Power, be it more
or less, we shall be expected to account
for the Use of it. Accordingly it was
some of the last Advice of a wise and
good Father to his Son: *Be merciful af-
ter thy Power. If thou hast much, give
plenteously; if thou hast little, do thy Di-
ligence gladly to give of that little; for so
gatherest thou thy self a good Reward in
the Day of Necessity.*

It

SERM. It happens indeed to be the Case of
IV. some, (would to God it were less com-
mon than it is!) to be so humbled
and afflicted in their outward Circum-
stances, that they can only be the Ob-
jects of that Charity and Compassion,
which, if it had pleased God to bless
them with the good Things of this Life,
they would gladly have reached out to
others. To these it may be offered as
just Matter of Consolation, that by their
indigent Condition they are exempted
from the Necessity of accounting for the
Use of Riches. But withal they must
remember, that there are many Instances
of Duty, wherein the poorest Man alive
may supply the Necessities, and admini-
ster to the Wants of others. To feed the
Hungry and to cloath the Naked; to
distribute among the Poor those Bless-
ings and Conveniencies, which they
want through the Affluence of others,
are, doubtless, very great and shining In-
stances; but they are by no means the
only Instances of Compassion; nor are
Riches the only Talents committed to
our

our Care for the Exercise of Christian SERM.
Charity. Who was ever in a poorer IV.
or more mean Condition, than our Sa-
viour Christ himself? And yet who was
ever more charitable than He? Or who
ever more abounded in those Offices of
Compassion, by which he has com-
manded us to express our Charity, and
to testify our Love to others? The
Character which is given him by one
of the Sacred Writers, and the Descrip-
tion which is left by all of them, is,
that *he went about doing Good*, and that
too at a Time, when his Poverty and
Distress gave Occasion to that pathet-
ical Complaint of his, *that the Foxes
had Holes, and the Birds of the Air had
Nests; But the Son of Man had not where
to lay his Head.* What Riches had any
of his Apostles, who were chosen from
some of the most mean Employments,
and had as great a Share in the Suffer-
ings and Afflictions, as in the Virtues
of their Lord and Master? But as poor
as they were, they never wanted Means
to express their compassionate Concern
VOL. I. F for

SERM. for Men, by the most conspicuous Acts
IV. of Charity. *Silver and Gold have* Acts iii.

I none, says one of them: *But* ^{6.}
such as I have, give I thee; In the
Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise
up and walk.

These, it may be said, are great Instances of Charity; but they are the Work of a miraculous Power; a Power, which Christ had by virtue of his divine Nature, and his Apostles from the Spirit of God: Nor can we be expected to do the Works that they did, since we have not the same Power to perform them. It is true, we cannot. But is there then no other Way? have we never an Opportunity to admonish the Wicked, to instruct the Ignorant, or to comfort our afflicted Brethren? Can we save them no Trouble in their ordinary Concerns by taking a little Trouble on our selves? Are there not many good Offices, that one may do another, without suffering the least Injury himself? What is it, that causes one to be esteemed a good, and another a bad Neigh-

Neighbour amongst us? Is it not the SERM.
granting or denying those common Fa- IV.
vours, which may be well spared with- 

out Damage to our selves? If so, what
Excuse can it be to say, we have no
Riches to bestow on others, when we
deny them, what we have to give?
when we refuse to afford them that
Comfort in Distress, which is all that
our present Circumstances will allow?
One would think the common Wants
and Necessities of our Nature, from
which none of us can pretend to be
exempted, should knit us all together
in the Bands of Love, and dispose us
to combine, if for no better Reason,
yet at least for the Ease and Conveni-
ence we should find in promoting each
other's Good. But where can we find
a greater Want of Charity, than among
those who stand most in need of it?
As if the Hardships of Poverty were too
little of themselves, some of those, who
feel it, do but add to its Afflictions;
grieving their Neighbours by their un-
friendly

SERM. friendly Treatment, and themselves by

IV. their uncharitable Tempers. While

these things are so, it is in vain for them to talk of the Good they would have done, if God's Providence had trusted them with the Management and Use of Riches. For as sure as they are envious and malicious in their Want, they would have been insolent and unkind in Plenty: As sure as they now murmur at the Good of others, they would then have been indifferent to their Distress. The same Principle would still have followed them, through all Fortunes, and all Circumstances in Life: And he that has so little Love and Benevolence in his Temper, so little Will and Inclination to do Good, as to lose the few small Opportunities he has, would have lost them, if they had been more and greater. The Reverse of our Saviour's Reasoning, will hold good with Respect to him; *He that has not been faithful over a few things, is not fit to be a Ruler over many*

ny things, nor shall he enter into the Joy SERM.
of his Lord. IV.

To return therefore to the Rule I gave you: Since so many excellent things are spoken of Charity, since Charity is the Bond of Perfectness; since the End of the Command is Charity; the Way to know, whether we are possessors of this heavenly Virtue, is (as I said) to compare the good Offices we have done, with the Opportunities we have had to do them. To compare them with the Good that is done by others, is a false and uncertain Rule; because we can neither know what is done by others, nor if we did, should we be bound to follow them. *Our Example may as well be a Rule to them, as theirs can be a Rule to us; and if neither we, nor they have an Eye to our own Power, but measure our Actions by the Practice of each other, in this Case the Blind will but lead the Blind, and both may fall into the Pit.* Whereas by comparing the good Offi-

SER. M. ces we have done, with the Opportunities we have had to do them, we shall be able to see, how our Charity has abounded, and in what Instances it has been defective: And may thereby be enabled so to regulate our Conduct, so to husband and improve our Talents, that when we are called to give account of our Stewardship, we may do it with Joy, and not with Grief.

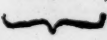
Thus much for the first Rule, to keep our Accounts even, and to prepare for the great Day of Judgment. The next is, To compare the Mercies we have receiv'd with the Returns we have made to Heaven for them. Numberless are the Blessings, which God's gracious Providence pours down among the Sons of Men. Every Day and every Hour we live, is a fresh Instance of his Goodness to us. To him we are indebted for all the Blessings we receive from the Exercise of our several Callings; for the prosperous Success of our Projects and Designs, and for the Fruits of our honest

nest Labours. It is He, who crowneth SERM.
the Year with his Goodness, and whose IV.
Clouds drop Fatness: Who visiteth the
Earth and blesseth it, yea, and maketh it
very plenteous: Who watereth her Fur-
rows, and sendeth Rain into the little
Valleys thereof; who maketh it soft with
the Drops of Rain, and blesseth the Increase
of it. Nay it is He, who gives us that
chearful Spirit, without which his other
Blessings would be lost to us. Every
Man, says Solomon, to whom God hath
given Riches and Wealth, and hath given
him Power to eat thereof, and to take his
Portion, and to rejoyce in his Labour, this
also is the Gift of God. So that to him
we are indebted both for the Blessings
themselves, and the Comfort and De-
light they yield. To him therefore we
should ascribe the Glory; to him we
should return the Thanks. This is the
only Recompense he requires for all the
Instances of his Favour to us, not as
reflecting any Honour upon him, or
adding any Lustre to his infinite Perfe-
ctions;

SERM. ctions; but as the best Tribute we are

IV. able to pay, the only Acknowledgment
we can make for his Goodness, and the
only Service, by which we can deserve
the Continuance of his Favour to us.
To know therefore, whether we have
thus deserved it; we must look back
upon the Mercies we have received:
Not only those general Mercies, which
he dispenses to all Men promiscuously,
but likewise those particular Instances
of his Providence, in which we are
more peculiarly concerned. Some sig-
nal Proofs of God's Favour and Prote-
ction, some eminent Escapes from Dan-
ger, some great Deliverances from ap-
proaching Evils, every Year's Experi-
ence will afford: And he must needs
be a very careless Observer of the Be-
nefits conferred upon him, who cannot
recollect many Instances of this Kind,
that have happened to his own Person
in particular. When therefore we have
raised up these Thoughts in our Minds,
the next Thing to be considered is,
what

what Acknowledgments we have made SERM.
for these great and undeserved Mercies. IV.

If we find upon Enquiry, that we have 
lived like Men under a Sense of such
infinite Obligations, God's Mercies are
then Mercies indeed: In as much as
they will tend not only to our present,
but likewise to our future Happiness.
If not, it is Time to make up our
Accounts, and to pay our Arrears of
Gratitude, by offering up at the Throne
of Grace, the small Recompense he re-
quires us to make, even the Acknow-
ledgments of a thankful Heart, and by
stedfastly resolving, through the Help of
*his Grace, to serve and please him in New-
ness of Life,* as long as we have our
Being upon Earth. And that this may
be done with the better Prospect of
Success, the next Rule I shall offer, is
this:

III. That we carefully compare the
Sins we have committed, with the
Temptations, by which we were seduced.
We can see, when the Power of a
Tempra-

SERM. Temptation is over, when the Pleasure
IV. is vanished, and the Passion gratified,
the true Value both of Vice and Virtue; which perhaps we could not, while we were blinded by our Interest, or intoxicated with the Love of Pleasure. The way therefore to know, what Enjoyment we may expect from the Commission of any Sin hereafter, is, to consider what Comfort or Satisfaction we receive from a Sin that is already past; what Recompense it has made us for the Loss of our Innocence, and for the Forfeiture of God's Favour to us. If Interest was the Motive, let us consider, what Benefit we have found in the Possession of ill-gotten Wealth; whether we are ever the happier or more contented Men, for any of our unlawful Gains; whether they have not wasted by insensible Degrees, without doing us any real Service; or if not, whether we have never any painful Thoughts from the Sense we have, that they are none of ours, but
ought

ought to be restored to others. If we SERM.
have no Remorse, our Case is dange- IV.
rous; and if we have, we *must* be sen-
sible how little it is worth while, to
fofeit that Innocence and Integrity of
Heart, which is a perpetual Spring of
Comfort, for the Sake of that, which,
when we come to prove it, is but Va-
nity and Vexation of Spirit. For *what*
will it profit a Man, to gain the whole
world, if he loses his own Quiet and Re-
pose? Much less will it profit him, if
he loses *his Soul* by it; the worst Loss
that he can possibly sustain. On the
other Hand, if Pleasure has been our
Aim, if it is for That, that we have
lost our Innocence, let us sit down,
and compute our Gains. *What Fruit*
had we then in those Things, whereof we
are now ashamed? What was all we got
by it, even in the Height of our En-
joyment, but a transient, and short
Delight? And what now remains of it,
but Remorse of Conscience, and the sad
Remembrance, that our Guilt still lives,
though

SERM. though the Pleasure be quite gone for
IV. ever? Such will be the Pleasure which
is yet to come; and which now tempts
us with the most inviting Fondness.
That also will be past for ever. When
we think on these things, who would
ever hearken to the Suggestions of ei-
ther Interest or Pleasure, seducing us to
Sin and Misery? who would ever sub-
mit to part with an Advantage, for a-
ny Thing which he has found, upon
balancing the Account, to be no fair
and just Equivalent?

Whilst we are upon this Head, we
may consider further, what Temptati-
ons have been most apt to beguile us;
and These, when we are satisfied of their
Force and Influence, we should be ve-
ry careful for the future to avoid; in
like manner as a prudent and frugal
Manager will avoid all Places, all Com-
panies and Occasions, which he has fre-
quently found, by examining his Ac-
counts, have led him to an unnecessary
Expence.

By

By this Rule when we have fortified SERM.
and secured our Hearts, and armed them IV.
against the Power of Temptation, we
may proceed to the fourth and last Rule
I shall offer, *viz.*

IV. To compare the Vows and Resolutions we have made, with their actual Performance and Effect. The worst of us, no doubt, have at some Time or other, had Thoughts of forsaking our Sins. If they were only general, without fixing any Time, what Reason have we to think, we shall ever do more, than repeat the same general Resolutions? If we *have* fixed a Time, and that Time is past, what Advances have we made in Virtue? Do we steadily hold out, in pursuance of our Vow, against the Force of all Temptations that assail us? If so, we have obtained a Victory indeed; and happy that Servant, *whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.* If not, we have Reason to suspect our Hearts, and to guard them with more Diligence for the future.

SERM. future. For if one Resolution has been

IV. broken through, what Hope, that we
shall keep another? It is a Sign there
is some perverse and wicked Principle,
which lies lurking at the Bottom of
our Hearts, which the longer we in-
dulse, the more Power it will gain,
and the more difficult it will be to
conquer it.

To conclude: We are hitherto pre-
served by the good Providence of God,
to consider and amend our Ways.
The Day of Grace is as yet vouch-
safed to us; tho' many of those with
whom we have conversed, are now
laid in the lowest Pit, in the Place of
Darkness, and in the Deep. *Their*
Sentence is fixt for ever: For there
is no Work, nor Device, nor Know-
ledge, nor Wisdom, nor Repentance,
nor Mercy in the Grave whither
they are gone: *Their Love also, and*
their Hatred, and their Envy is now
perished; neither have they any more

Husbanding our Time.

79

a Portion for ever in any thing that SERM.
is done under the Sun. How long IV.

any of us may survive, we know not: But this we know, that we must fall at last, and that the Time we have to live, whether long or short, is as nothing with respect to that Eternity, which is to come, and for which therefore we should be constantly preparing, lest Day succeed Day, and Year succeed Year, and Death overtake us in the same slothful State, resolving to repent without beginning, or beginning without ever finishing. Wherefore, my beloved Brethren, *Let us exhort one another daily, while it is called to Day, lest any of us be hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin:* And may God, of his great Mercy, dispose our Hearts to consider our real Interest, and so teach us to number our Days, that we may apply our Hearts unto Wisdom.

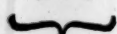
Now

80

The Necessity of well, &c.

SERM.

IV.



*Now to God the Father, Son, and
Holy Ghost, be ascribed all Honour,
Praise, Might, Majesty and Do-
minion, both now, henceforth, and
for evermore.*



The

rel.



The one Thing needful.

A

S E R M O N

Preached before the D U K E.

LUKE X. 41, 42.

*And Jesus answered, and said unto her,
Martha, Martha, thou art careful,
and troubled about many Things: But
one Thing is needful; and Mary hath
chosen that good Part, which shall not
be taken from her.*



THE Characters of the two SERM.
Persons that are mentioned V.
in my Text, may be gather-
ed from the Circumstances
related of them. The Story is this.

VOL. I.

G

Our

SERM. Our Saviour, it seems, in the Course of
 V. his Travels from one Place to another,
 { had just entered into a Village, which
 was called *Bethany*, where he was courteously received and entertained, in the House of a Woman, whose Name was *Martha*. This *Martha* had a Sister, whose Name was *Mary*; the same Person, of whom we are told in the Gospel of St. *John*, that having purchased a Box of Ointment of Spikenard, very precious, she anointed the Feet of *Jesus* with it, and wiped them with her own Hair. Our Saviour, who never lost an Opportunity to do Good, instead of attending to his own Refreshment, as it was natural at such a Time to do, was discoursing to his Disciples, and entertaining them, no doubt, with something, which was well worth their Hearing. *Mary* perceived this, and being willing to improve by the Instruction of so good a Teacher, sat down at his Feet, and heard him. *Martha*, in the mean Time, who perhaps

haps was as well pleased with this Visit SERM.
 which her Lord had made her, was V.
 expressing her Respect to him in a dif-
 ferent Way, by preparing things proper
 to entertain him; and missing her Sister,
 whose Help she expected, and which
 could never be more necessary, than it
 was then, she interrupts our Saviour in
 the midst of his Discourse, with what
 she thought a very reasonable Com-
 plaint. *Lord, dost thou not care, that
 my Sister hath left me to serve alone?
 Bid her therefore, that she help me.* To
 which our Saviour replies in my Text,
*Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and
 troubled about many things: But one thing
 is needful; and Mary hath chosen that
 good Part, which shall not be taken away
 from her.* In which Words he does not
 seem directly to disapprove of the Part
 which *Martha* chose. For some Body
 must have done what *Martha* did, or
 our Saviour must have wanted that ne-
 cessary Refreshment, for the Sake of
 which he came. Nor is his Answer to

SERM. be understood, as respecting only what
V. had happened at that Time in particular,
but as extending to the Characters of the two Persons here mentioned, with respect to their whole Conduct and Behaviour. *Martha* was a Person of an active Temper, diligent and industrious in the Management of her Affairs, and what we call a very prudent Woman. *Mary*, on the other Hand, was less addicted to Business, and more given to Contemplation and Prayer, to the hearing of God's Word, and to such Acts of Piety, as are more apt to recommend us to the Favour of God, than the good Opinion and Esteem of Men. Something like this may easily be collected from the little, that is said of them in some other Places; but especially from the Answer, which our Saviour here makes, and which seems to have respect to the whole Government of their Lives, in which we may suppose there was as much Difference at other Times, as in this Instance there appears

The one Thing needful.

85

appears to be. The Meaning therefore SERM.
of the Words is this. *Martha, Mar-* V.
tha, thou art careful and troubled a-
bout many Things, i. e. I perceive
thou art very much concerned about
the Management of thy worldly Busi-
ness. I see, that in this, and I know,
that in other Instances, thou art apt to be
full of Care: for which I do ~~not~~ blame
thee; but I would not have thee think,
that this ought to be thy only Study;
that the Cares of this World should em-
ploy thy whole Thoughts, and shut out
all other Business. *For one thing is*
needful; one thing is still wanting: I
need not tell thee, what it is I mean:
For *Mary* hath chosen it; and a good
Part it is; *and it shall not be taken away*
from her, i. e. She shall not be disturb-
ed in the Exercise of it now, on Ac-
count of this Complaint of thine; nor
indeed shall she ever lose it. It is on
this Account, as well as on many others,
a much better Part, than what thou
hast chosen, inasmuch as it will never

SERM. fail her. It is a Part, which can never be
V. unseasonable, or unnecessary; nor shall
the ever be disappointed in it.

Having thus shewn, what I take to be the Meaning of the Words, I shall now enter on the Doctrine contained in them.

The first thing to be observed, is the Character of *Martha*, and the Judgment, which our Saviour passes thereupon; in which, as I said, he does not blame her for her Care in the Management of her worldly Business, much less for her Diligence in attending upon him, and preparing an Entertainment for him; but for making such things the whole Business of her Life, being bent upon them, and swallowed up in them, to that Degree, that she could not give a fit Attention to those things which concerned her Soul. And this, I believe, is a pretty common Case: For which Reason I shall consider it more particularly.

First

The one Thing needful. 87

First then, it is certain, there is a ne-SERM.
cessary Attention to the Management V.
of our worldly Business, which is so far
from deserving Censure, that it is a
very commendable and useful Quality :
a Duty, which we owe to our selves
in particular, and to the Families, to
which we severally belong. Masters
and Mistresses have an Interest in so do-
ing; and so indeed have Children,
when they have Sense enough to know,
that their Happiness and Welfare de-
pend upon their Parents, and that their
Parents seldom suffer in any worldly
Matter, but they also must needs suffer
with them. Servants indeed have no
Interest of their own, or at least but
few of them, though some perhaps have,
in the Success of their Master's Business.
But it is their Duty however, if that has
any Weight with them, to manage eve-
ry thing with as much Care for the Be-
nefit of their Master, as if it were their
own personal Concern. This they are
bound in strict Justice to perform; and

SERM. without this they do not answer their
V. Master's Expectation; they do not perform that Covenant or Agreement, which is always supposed, if not expressly mentioned, in the Contract which is made between them.

Much might be said, if my Subject would admit of it, to enforce the Practice of this Care and Diligence, from many Texts of Scripture, that recommend it; but it is my Business now, to shew the Danger of abusing it; for the best things, we know, are liable to be abused, and among the rest this Duty in particular.

Be pleased then to observe the Censure, which is here past upon One, who was by no Means defective in this Duty, but was rather too careful to perform it. She rather over-did it, being so far from shunning any Business, that it was her Duty to attend, that she rather perplexed and disturb'd her Thoughts with more than was needful for her. The Care of her Affairs was a perfect Trouble

ble and Fatigue to her; allowing no SERM.
Rest or Interruption from them, but V.
perpetually distracting her with their
Number and Variety, and oppressing
her with their constant Weight. Not that
she was addicted, as we can find, to
Avarice: On the contrary, she seems
to have been liberal enough in dispen-
sing what she had, as Occasion offered,
in charitable and pious Uses. Such was
the Reception of our Blessed Saviour,
which is remembred in this Chapter to
her Advantage, and which seems to
have been the Foundation of that Friend-
ship to the two Sisters, which moved
him, as we are told in the Gospel of
St. *John*, to raise their Brother *Lazarus*
from the Dead.

The Character of *Martha* is therefore
the Character of a provident and frugal
Woman, neither covetous in Saving, nor
extravagant in Spending, but sensible
withal, how very necessary it is to at-
tend her Business, and look after her
Affairs, which disposes her sometimes to
be

SERM. be too anxious and solicitous, too much
 V. troubled and concern'd about them.

~ This is a Character which one would not take to be a bad one, the last Part of it being all that can be thought so. But our Saviour, you see, was so dissatisfied with this, that in the Height of her Pains and Care to please him, he takes upon him to reprove her for it. Martha, Martha, *Thou art careful and troubled about many Things, but one Thing is needful.* In one Respect she was more careful than she should be, but this caused her to be too negligent in another; which happened to be a Point of such vast Importance, that no other Kind of Diligence could excuse it. What this Point is, we shall presently observe. In the mean time, let us consider, if a Woman of this Character could deserve to be so censured and reprov'd, what must be the Case of many other Persons, who fall short of this Character, defective as it is, and who are not so good as *Martha*? Some People are quite

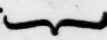
The one Thing needful. 91

quite careless and improvident in their SERM.
Affairs, and for want of that Diligence, V.
with which she abounded, do wantonly
throw away in the Service of their Lusts,
what ought to be preserv'd for their
own comfortable Subsistence, or the
Relief of their poor Brethren in Distress.
Others go beyond her in that Part of
her Character, which our Saviour here
justly reprehends, setting their Hearts so
much upon worldly Treasures, and ta-
king so much Pleasure in them, that
they cannot be persuaded to part with
what they might, for the Benefit of
those that want it. These People may
be told, that to put them in such a
State, as our Saviour recommends to
Martha, more things than one are need-
ful. The Former must be taught that
Care and Diligence, which is necessary
to be employed in their worldly Busi-
ness; and the Latter must part with that
immoderate Affection, which they bear
to their worldly Riches and Possessions,
before they can arrive at that low De-
gree

SERM. gree of Virtue, of which the Person,
 V. we now speak of, was posselt. When
 { once they have done this, they have
 gained a great Point, but still they must
 be told, *there is one Thing needful; a
 Thing*, that is of infinite more Weight
 and Moment, than all that they can do
 besides. And that is the Part which *Ma-
 ry* chose. *Mary has chosen that good Part,*
which shall not be taken away from her.

And now we enter upon another kind
 of Character; the Character of One,
 who, by all that is said of her, appears
 to have had but very small Regard to
 the things we have been now consider-
 ing. *Mary* was a Woman of a quite
 different Spirit; she seems to have had
 but very little of this World, but a great
 deal of the next about her. For which
 Reason, her Example, with our Savi-
 our's Approbation, exprest in these
 Words, which make a Part of my Text,
 has been urged by some, as a Pattern of
 that recluse and monastick State of Life,
 which is practised in the Church of
 Rome,

The one Thing needful. 93

Rome. But this is a Mistake. For if SERM.
it be supposed, that this holy Person V.
was actually engaged in such a State of 
Life as this, it is enough to answer,
that such a State of Life had never at
that Time been profest by any, and
that certainly she could not belong to
any Order, which was not at that Time
in being. If it be only meant, that
her Frame of Mind was fitted to such
a State of Life, and that therefore it is
probable, if there had been any Order,
any Institution, or Society of this Kind,
in which she might have been admit-
ted, she would have used the Opportu-
nity, and devoted her self to it; the
Answer is, first, This is more than we
know; secondly, If we did know it,
it cannot be inferred from any thing
that is said in the Text before us, that
our Saviour would have liked her
Choice; for he certainly speaks of a ve-
ry different Thing; *a Thing* which was
consistent with the most active Life,
and which therefore he recommends as
the

SERM. the only thing wanting to one, that
V. was engaged in a Life of Care and
Trouble; not expecting her to retire and
leave the World, but to live piously
and devoutly in it. It may likewise be
observed, that the Example of *Mary*,
which our Saviour recommends to her
Sister's Notice, as worthy to be copied
by her, is the Example of *one*, who li-
ved as much in the World, as her more
active and busy Sister; tho' one of them,
on this great and extraordinary Occasi-
on, had left the other to do every
thing by her self. If this had not been
so, there had been no room for the
Complaint, which is made by one Si-
ster of the other; why should *Martha*
think it hard to be forsaken by her Si-
ster, If it was no more than her con-
stant Custom so to do? if she was whol-
ly given up to a Life of Piety and De-
votion, and had quitted all worldly Bu-
siness? The Preference therefore, which
is here given to *Mary*, cannot properly
be understood as any Ground or Foun-
dation

dation for preferring such a State of SERM.
Privacy and Retirement, to an active V.
and busy Life; since our Saviour, it is

plain in the Words before us, had no
Design to discourse of either. His Opi-
nion of that Matter may be gathered
from his Practice, from which it appears,
that he preferred the latter, tho' he
sometimes used the former; he retired
sometimes from the Multitude that was
about him, from the Company of his
Disciples, and the great Work of Teach-
ing, that he might have Leisure for a
little while to lift up his Thoughts to
the Place from whence he came. But
his Time, for the most part, was em-
ployed in Publick; the chief Business of
his Life was to go about, *and do Good.*
And surely to be shut up, and sequest-
red from the World, to shun all Op-
portunities of doing Good to others,
can never be the way to follow his Ex-
ample: It can never, to be sure, be *the*
one thing needful, which our Saviour
here labours to recommend. What then

may

SERM. may we suppose to be the Meaning of
V. these Words? What was it, that *Mary*
was commended for having chosen, and
Martha is reproved for wanting? I
answer in one Word, it was Piety.
It was a Sense of Religion, a true Spirit
of Devotion, a Desire to recommend
her self to the Favour of God, and to
be graciously accepted by him. This
was a Thing, which by one of the Sisters
in the great Hurry of her worldly
Business, was forgot, but remembered
by the other, who was never better
pleased, than with such an Opportunity,
as was now offered to her to improve
in Virtue, and be instructed in her
Duty from the Mouth of so Divine
a Teacher. This was what moved her
to steal a little Time from a Business,
in which doubtless she might well have
been employed, thinking perhaps that
her more careful Sister might at that
Time have made a shift without her;
or perhaps designing to divide her Time
in such a Manner between her Sister
and

and her Guest, as not to be quite use-SERM.
less and unprofitable to the One, nor V.
lose the Benefit she expected from the
Other: But whatever were her Thoughts,
for what Reason soever she held her self
excused from attending upon her Sister,
her Intention was so good, her Piety so
great, her Desire to be instructed was
so much to be commended, that our
Saviour who knew her Heart, took Oc-
casion to propose her as a Pattern to her
Sister; one Thing you want, and your
Sister has it, and therefore to her Ex-
ample I refer you.

Thus have we seen, what the one
Thing is, which our Saviour found *Mar-
tha* wanted. It is a Spirit of Devo-
tion, a true Sense of Religion, which
many Men want, who notwithstanding
that, are esteemed very upright Men:
and so they may be between Man and
Man: They may be just in their Deal-
ings, they may be temperate and sober,
they may give no Offence, they may
be diligent in their Business; and yet in

SERM. the Sight of God they may be far from

V. being upright, for want of this *one thing*
 needful. It has been said, that the best

Actions that were ever done by any Heathens, deserve no better Name, than that of *splendid Sins*. What shall we say then of the seemingly good Actions of those Christians, who are destitute of that Christian Principle, from which every Christian Virtue proceeds? We will not call them Sins, for that may be thought hard: but surely they are unavailing Virtues. And is it not great Pity, that good Actions should be lost, for want of a good Principle to recommend them? and that after we have taken Pains to live soberly and righteously, we should lose our Reward, and be deceived at last, for want of living godly too? Yet how many Men are there, who have outwardly no Fault, and inwardly no Sense of Virtue! who are very regular and orderly in the Discharge of all Duties, except that which they owe to God!

That,

That, which is not only the most ne-
cessary of all Duties, but that also with-
out which the Performance of all Du-
ties, is no better than Formality and
Pretence? For if we do not love God,
and study to please him, we have in
Truth no Religion in us: if our Right-
eousness proceeds from any worldly Mo-
tive, if we propose any other Reward
but that which he has promised, and
allow'd us to pursue, it is not Righte-
ousness, it is Falshood and Hypocrisy;
it wants the great Requisite, the one
thing necessary to make it acceptable
and well pleasing to God. Yet those,
who are usually called moral Men; those
who do their Duty to themselves and
others, upon a Principle of Conveni-
ence, a Principle of Interest, a Princi-
ple of Decency, or any other Principle
but that, which, as I said, is the true
genuine Christian Principle, have a ve-
ry hard Work to do. They labour as
much, and take as much Pains, as, if
it were employ'd in a better Manner,
H 2 would

SERM. would certainly recommend them to the

V. Favour of God, and entitle them to everlasting Life. Nay indeed they take more; for it is a much harder Task to perform such Actions without the Love of God, than it would be to perform them with it. Nay harder, than it would be to obtain the Love of God, and to furnish their Minds with such a Spirit of Religion, as would render their whole Duty easy. That therefore all those, who are possessors of this Virtue, may be the more inclined to keep it, to fix it in their Hearts, and to exert it in their Lives, and by all means to cherish and promote it, I shall briefly propose one Motive to recommend it, suggested in the last Words of my Text. *Mary* hath chosen that good Part, that shall not be taken away from her. That it is a good Part, you have heard; to which I shall now add, that it shall not be taken from us.

This can be said of no other thing, that Men are apt to make the Object
of

The one Thing needful.

101

of their Wishes. Nothing in this SERM.
World that Men pursue, no earthly V.
Blessing of whatever Kind it be, is so
permanent and lasting, so fixt and cer-
tain, but in some Sense or other it may
be taken from us. But of true Religi-
on and the Love of God, the good
Part which *Mary* chose, we cannot be
deprived, we can never lose it, it can
never be stollen, it can never be forced
from us; if we do not wilfully part with
it, we are sure to possess it, and it is
sure to be a Blessing to us. Nothing
else we value, can be so relied on: For
whether it be Friends, they shall fail;
whether it be Pleasure, that shall cease;
whether it be Riches, they shall vanish
away. And even while we keep them,
there are Times and Seasons, when they
can do us no real Service, and that too,
when we stand most in need of them.
How vain is it to talk to a sick Man
of Friends! How little is he dispos'd to
hear of Pleasure! What Comfort can his
Wealth afford him! All these he would

H 3

gladly

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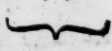
H 3

gladly

SERM. gladly barter and exchange, *perhaps for*
 V. *one Moment's Ease*; certainly for a Time

to recover his Strength, to recollect the scattered Powers and Capacities of his Soul, *before he go hence and be no more seen.* A little Time to make his Peace with God, to arm himself with Strength and Courage to meet Death, is to such a Man a thing of more Worth and Value, than all he can possess besides. And what, but Religion, can enable him to do this? What else dispose him with an undaunted Heart, to deliver himself up to that King of Terrors, to be transported by him to the great World of Spirits, which are waiting for their final Doom? Religion will do this: and after this, Religion will for ever be our Pleasure and Delight: It will be our chief Happiness in the other World, as it is now our chief Interest in this.

Thus we see in what Sense it is here said of Religion, that it shall not be taken away from us. It shall never fail us,

us, it shall not, like those which are SERM.
called worldly Goods, be removed from V.
us by any Accident or Disaster. It 
does not depend upon any Change of
Fortune; nor is it liable to be impaired
by Age. It cannot be corrupted by
Moth or Rust, neither can Thieves
break through and steal it. It is not
in another Respect like the Goods of
Fortune, which at some certain Seasons
are improper to be enjoyed, and in some
Circumstances are quite useless to us.
There is no Time when Religion may
not properly be enjoyed; there are no
Circumstances that destroy the Use of
it. When other Comforts are most
apt to fail us, it is then in its greatest
Vigour. It rises in Proportion to our
Exigencies and Wants, and the more
we are afflicted and forsaken by the
World, the more ready it is to re-
vive and cheer us. In all Circumstan-
ces and Conditions, in Sicknes and in
Health, in Prosperity and Distress, it
is our safest Guide, our best Compani-

SERM. on, our truest Friend, our only Security from the Fear of Death, and when it comes, our only Comfort and Support. Nay, it will follow us to the Grave, it will rise with us at the Day of Judgment, it will recommend us to the Favour and Mercy of our Judge, and ascend with us to a State of Glory.

One Way there is, and there is but one, by which we can ever lose it, and that is, by neglecting it, which too many do, even after they have taken some Pains to gain it, and have felt its blessed Influence on their Hearts. Good Men have sometimes their Fits of Sloth, which betray them into Sin and Folly: to prevent which, the same Care which *Martha* used in the Management of her worldly Business, is necessary to be applied to our spiritual Concerns, if we expect to persevere unto the End. Let those therefore, who are possessors of this one thing necessary, take heed that they do not lose it; and let those who have it not, pray to God to give it,
and

The one Thing needful.

105

and use their best Care to gain it. SERM.
And may God of his great Mercy give V.
us all Grace to consider it as the best
and most valuable Possession we can
gain, and the most worthy of our Care
in keeping, that we set a just Value on
the Things of the next World, and no
more than a just Value on the Things
of this.

*Now to God the Father, God the Son,
and God the Holy Ghost, &c.*



Mysteries



*Mysteries no real Objections to the
Truth of Christianity.*

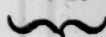
A

S E R M O N

On DEUT. xxix. 29.

*The secret Things belong unto the Lord
our God. But the Things which are
revealed, belong unto us, and to our
Children for ever, that we may do all
the Words of this Law.*

SERM.
VI.



AMONG the several Artifices,
by which the Enemies of our
Faith have attempted to de-
stroy the Credit of Reveal'd
Religion, that which they have pra-
ctised with the greatest Success is, the
repre-

representing it as an Enemy to our Reason. A Charge, which, if it could be supported with as much Truth and Justice, as it is sometimes with Confidence asserted, must have its Weight, not only upon the ignorant and unwary, but likewise upon the wisest and most considerate Part of Mankind. For whatever is plainly contradictory to our Reason, can never be the Object of our Faith: And whatever Religion would obtrude such Doctrines upon its Professors, must be a false or corrupt Religion. And thus far we may agree with our Adversaries: But then it is our Duty, on the other Hand, in a Matter of so much Consequence to our Salvation, to take heed how we reject a Doctrine, as plainly contradictory to our Reason, till we have thoroughly tried and examined it, and that, not only with such a deliberate Caution, as the Importance of the Thing deserves, but likewise with all that Diffidence and Humility, which becomes Creatures of such

SERM. such limited Capacities. There are ma-

VI. ny things utterly unconceivable, which
nevertheless, upon a strict Enquiry, will be found not to be against Reason, but above it. This we are willing enough to acknowledge in general, tho' in particular Instances we are too apt to forget it. Which of us will not readily confess, that our Knowledge is but finite? And yet, when we come to use it, we behave, as if we thought it infinite. Known unto *us* are all God's Counsels from the Foundation of the World. We arraign and acquit his Providence, as best suits with our own Schemes of Government, and the secret Things which belong to him, we explain in so clear a Manner, that they seem to be no Secrets at all to us! It is a Reflection, we think, upon our Understandings, not to be able to give some Account of every thing. Solutions, Subtleties, and Distinctions are found out to palliate our Ignorance, and rather than renounce one favourite Error,
we

we intrench our selves within a thousand others. SERM.
VI.

To check this exorbitant Curiosity, this Pride of human Reason, was the Design of *Moses* in my Text, when, after having instructed his Followers in the great Duties of their Religion, and (as he terms it) *set Life and Death before them*, he proceeds to inform them in the Words of my Text, that if there was any thing in the Revelation then delivered to them, which they did not fully and perfectly comprehend; or if any Question should be moved hereafter, which for want of further Knowledge they were not able to resolve, they should content themselves with the Light that he had given them: For that there were some things, which they must not expect to understand. *The secret things belong unto the Lord our God.* After this, that they might the more readily acquiesce in that Share of Knowledge which was imparted to them, he proceeds in the next Place to acquaint them with

110 *Mysteries no real Objections*

SERM. with the Use of it: *But those things*
VI. *which are revealed, belong unto us, and*
to our Children for ever, that we may do
all the Words of this Law.

Now because a Spirit of Scepticism and Infidelity is, at least, as common in our Days, as in his; there being a Set of unbelieving Disputants, who will admit nothing without the Evidence of Demonstration, unless it be an Error of their own inventing; because also the great Mysteries of our Religion were never more rudely handled, nor the moral Part of it less practised, than at present; I propose for these Reasons in the following Discourse to insist upon these four Particulars.

First, That the Difficulty, or indeed the utter Impossibility of conceiving the sacred Mysteries of our Faith, is no just Objection to the Truth of them.

Secondly, That in Matters so far beyond the Reach of our Capacities, it is not only a needless, but a dangerous Presumption, to be too curious and inquisitive concerning them. Thirdly,

to the Truth of Christianity. I I I

Thirdly, That there are other Mat-SERM.
ters of far greater Consequence, suffi- VI.
cient to employ our Meditation, and ~~~~~
which it is our Duty to study and
examine. But

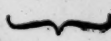
Fourthly and lastly, That this, as
well as all our other Knowledge, will be
utterly lost and useless, unless it has an
Influence upon our Lives and Man-
ners, the sole End and Design of God's
revealing his Will to us being, as it is
expressed in my Text, *that we may do
all the Words of his Law.*

These Propositions I shall consider
briefly in their Order.

And First, the Difficulty, or indeed
the utter Impossibility of conceiving
the sacred Mysteries of our Faith,
is no just Objection to the Truth
of them.

I say this upon a Supposition, that
the Grounds of our Religion are suffi-
cient; that it has been confirm'd by
Signs and Wonders, and attested by all
the

SERM. the outward Circumstances of Credibility, that can be expected in a Revelation from God; that its practical Doctrines are unexceptionable, and worthy of their divine Original; and that there is no other Reason to dispute the Truth of it, but the Mysteries which it requires us to believe. In this Case, I say, however it may mortify our Pride to submit to Doctrines, which we do not fully comprehend, yet if they are not absolutely contradictory to our Reason, we ought not to dispute the Truth of them. For after all our boasted Excellencies, what is there, that we *do* fully comprehend? Is there any thing in the whole Compass of Nature, which, if we would pursue our Enquiries to the utmost, it would not puzzle the wisest of us to explain? The most ordinary and common Objects of our Senses, if we would search into their secret Qualities, are as mysterious as any Article of our Faith. The whole Creation,

tion is full of Wonders, were it not SERM.
that they grow common and familiar to VI.
us, before we are able to consider them, 
as we ought. Their Existence we never doubt of, because we see and perceive that they exist. But had we not the Demonstration of our Senses, Reason would never help us to the Discovery. And is it any Wonder then, that our Reason should fail us, where our Senses cannot possibly exert themselves? If the material World is too glorious for our Comprehension, how should we understand the World of Spirits? It is a wild and wanton Curiosity to expect it, which if God Almighty should be pleased to gratify, new Difficulties would still arise to us, and all the additional Knowledge we had gain'd, would but lend us Light to be more sceptical and inquisitive.

The Truth is, if there were not some Difficulties in our Religion, there could be no such thing as Faith; it would be

114 *Mysteries no real Objections*

SERM. lost and swallow'd up in Knowledge.

VI. All that we have to do, when an Article is propos'd to us, is to consider, whether it be the proper Object of our Reason. If not, however true in it self, it must needs be to *us* mysterious. And to reject any Doctrine on that Score only, is to set up our own shallow Judgments, as the Standard of all Truth and Possibility; 'tis to claim to our selves a Knowledge no less than infinite, to prescribe Bounds to Omnipotence it self, and say; *Thus far shalt thou come, and no further.* Better would it become us to cast down Imaginations, and every high Thing that exalteth it self against the Knowledge of God, and bring into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Christ; and however necessary we may find it, in Matters within the Compass of our Reason, to guard against Artifice and Imposture, by insisting upon her Supremacy, yet in Subjects, which are manifestly too great for her Comprehension,

sion, patiently to acquiesce in the Re-
velation which God has made to us, VI.
and take his Word for the Truth of
them. I will explain what I mean, by
an Instance. If any Body should take
it in his Head to persuade me, that a
Piece of common Bread or Wafer is,
in a strict and literal Sense, the whole
and perfect Body of our Lord *Jesus*
Christ; and not only so, but that ano-
ther Piece of Bread is, at the same time,
the same whole and perfect Body, and
this, tho' my Reason tells me by the
Information of my Senses, that it is no
more than common Bread; I can never
believe such monstrous Contradictions,
what^{ever} Arguments may be produc'd
to prove them. So again, if he should
endeavour to persuade me, that God is
not just and good, or deny any of his
moral Attributes and Perfections, I
should still find the same Difficulty to
believe him. Because, tho' God is not
the Object of my Senses, yet the same

SERM. Arguments and Deductions of Reason,

VI. that assure me there is a God, assure
me likewise, that he has all possible Perfections. But if he should proceed to inform me further, that in the Unity of this Godhead, there are three Persons, here my Reason would be utterly at a Stand. I know, that in corporeal Beings, such as Man, an Union of this Kind would be impossible: But I am so little acquainted with the Nature of immaterial Substances, and so far from understanding the Manner of their Existing, that for ought I know, it may be so: And therefore, if I have Reason to believe that God has revealed it, from thenceforth I am sure it is so. The same may be said of all the other Mysteries of our Faith. The Difficulty is not in the Nature of the Thing, but the Defect of our own Ideas: And as it is a Sign of mere Sottishness and Stupidity, to believe any thing which contradicts our Reason; so is it an Instance of
great

great Pride and Contumacy, to dispute SERM.
the Truth of any thing, which is above VI.
it. 

And for this Reason it was, that I
observed in the second Place,

II. That in Matters, so far beyond
the Reach of our Capacities, it is not
only a needless, but a dangerous Pre-
sumption, to be too curious and inqui-
sitive concerning them.

That it is needless, appears from the
Difficulty of understanding them: And
that it is dangerous, the many Here-
sies and Errors, which have sprung up
in the Christian Church, may furnish
us with abundant Evidence. There is
a Sort of half-read Smatterers in Philo-
sophy, who have just Sense enough to
raise Doubts and Scruples, but not
enough to clear them up. It is the
Nature, you know, of half-witted Peo-
ple to be very jealous and suspicious.
They spare no Pains to shew you, that
they will not be over-reach'd in any
thing; and the Result of all this Cau-

SERM. tion is, that, with a great deal of Shrewd-

VI. ness and Sagacity, they fare worse than
those who pretend to neither. The
Case is much the same with the half-learned too. They stand aloof, if you offer to instruct them, and are resolv'd not to be cheated into the Belief of any thing. They stand upon the hardest Terms imaginable, and because it is a Disparagement to take any thing upon Trust, they will admit nothing that is not levell'd to their Capacities. They have read enough to suspect every thing they read, and rather than be drawn in to believe too much, they take care to believe nothing at all. It is pity, the indiscreet and hasty Zeal of some pious and well-meaning Men has attempted to defeat these invincible Antagonists, by answering their little Cavils and Objections. It is one of the least of all Advantages to the Interests of Religion to shew, that its Adversaries are stupid and absurd. It lies upon *them* to prove, that the Doctrines

we

we teach, are impossible. Till then SERM.
we may 'be fairly excused, if we do not VI.
leave our *own* Borders naked and defenceless, to make unnecessary Inroads upon *them*. It is incredible, what an Advantage the Enemies of our Faith have gained from this our spiritual Knight-Errantry: This Humour of encountering all the Errors and Absurdities, all the mis-begotten Monsters and Chimæras that were ever hatch'd by a heated Imagination in the Brains of conceited Infidels. How often have these abortive Births gather'd Strength by Exercise and Opposition! How often by the Indiscretion of their Opponents become formidable even to Truth it self! But if Truth will quit her Post, and put her self upon unnecessary Skirmishes in the Confines of Error and Ignorance, it is no Wonder, if she sometimes suffers in the Conflict. Neither Party, while they fight in the Dark, has more than an equal Chance for Success. And what is it, but to fight in the Dark,

SERM. when *one* insists upon greater Evidence

VI. than the Subject can possibly admit,
and the other will not be content without giving him Satisfaction upon a Subject, which neither of them understand! How often have two strenuous Antagonists, one of which perhaps set out in the Right, so puzzled and perplexed themselves with unmeaning Terms, so blinded themselves with the Cloud, which they have raised between them, that in the End they have proved both in the wrong! How often has Religion it self been injured through the Sides of an injudicious Advocate! And how often has the Destruction of an ancient Heresy given Birth to a Brood of new ones! Have not almost all the Disputes and Divisions, that ever infested the Christian World, been upon Subjects of the most mysterious Nature? And have they not all had their Rise from the same common Source, the Desire of being wise above what is written, and the Pride of explaining inexplicable

ble Difficulties? How much better SERM.
 would it have been, both for the Com- VI.
 batants themselves, and the World that
 was to receive the Benefit of their La-
 bours, if they had been content to talk
 Sense upon Subjects they understood,
 and silently acknowledged with Won-
 der and Reverence, *that the secret Things*
belong to the Lord our God! Especially
 if it be considered in the third Place,

III. That there are other Matters of
 far greater Consequence, sufficient to
 employ our Meditation, and which it
 is our Duty to study and examine.
The Things which are revealed, belong to
us and to our Children for ever. By the
 Things which are revealed, we may
 understand in the Place before us, all
 Things, that are any way made evi-
 dent to our Reason. For whatever
 Distinctions may be sometimes made
 between the Evidence of Sense and Rea-
 son, or between the Evidence of Rea-
 son and Revelation, they are all in this
 Case the same. The Senses are but In-
lets

SERM. lets or Avenues, by which outward Ob-
 VI. jects make their Way to the Under-
 ~~~~~ standing: It is the Reason or Thinking  
 Faculty, which helps us to form our  
 Judgment, and which should ultimately  
 determine our Assent. When therefore  
 we distinguish, as we sometimes do, be-  
 tween the Evidence of Sense and Rea-  
 son, we can mean no more than this;  
 that in some Cases, our Reason is as-  
 sisted by our Senses, and in others, it is  
 not. In spiritual and abstracted Spe-  
 culations, we have the Use of our Rea-  
 son only; but in Matters, which are  
 the proper Objects of our Senses, they  
 furnish the Mind with Intelligence, and  
*she* forms her Judgment thereupon.  
 But in both Cases we appeal to Reason,  
 and upon *her* Answer we found our  
 Faith. Revelation is another Help, but  
 is no more than a Help to Reason. It  
 discovers to us many Secrets of Nature,  
 many great Designs of Providence, ma-  
 ny forcible Motives to the Practice of  
 our Duty, which would otherwise have  
 been



been hidden from our Eyes. But Re-SERM.  
velation it self can have no Credit and VI.  
Authority, till it has received the Ap-  
probation of our Reason. For what-  
ever Articles of Faith are revealed to us  
in holy Writ, are founded upon no surer  
Evidence, than that the Scriptures are  
the Word of God: Now that the Scrip-  
tures are the Word of God, we discover  
by our Reason only; and therefore what-  
ever Degree of Certainty those Articles  
may be supposed to have, it can be no  
greater than our Reason gives. This  
Observation I thought necessary to be  
made, because the Evidence of Faith is  
sometimes magnified and exalted in  
Opposition to that of Reason, nay in  
Opposition to what is called the Evi-  
dence of Sense. A Notion which may  
be of Use for the Support of Popery,  
which is established in downright Contra-  
diction to our Senses: But *our* Religion  
does not want such Helps. It is a Dis-  
service to any Cause, to call in Error  
and Falshood to its Assistance: And  
Truth it self is too apt to suffer from  
the

SERM. the Defeat of such weak Auxiliaries.

VI. On the contrary, to suppose our Faith  
 { to be founded, as it is, on Reason, is  
 so far from invalidating the Evidence  
 of Faith, that it does very much con-  
 firm and strengthen it. For what great-  
 er Degree of Certainty can be required  
 by any rational Creature, than to be  
 convinced upon rational Principles? If  
 it were possible for God Almighty to  
 require us to believe upon any other  
 Grounds, our Faith would be nothing  
 but Error and Confusion, and there  
 would be no such thing as Certainty  
 in the World.

Whatever therefore is made so evident  
 to our Reason, whether left to her own  
 Inferences and Deductions, or aided by  
 the Information of the Senses, or in-  
 structed by the Word of God; what-  
 ever, I say, is by any of these Ways  
 made so evident to our Reason, that  
 we believe and acknowledge it to be  
 true, whether we fully understand the  
 Manner of it or no, may be said to be  
 revealed by God. And what a vast  
 Field

Field does this afford for Contempla-SERM.  
tion! Who would complain, with such VI.  
a boundless View before him, that his  
Prospect is not more enlarged? That  
Mystery, *which was hid from Ages and  
Generations, and which the Angels desired  
to look into,* is now made manifest unto  
us. We know enough to employ our  
Wonder, and enough to furnish Matter  
for our Joy; enough to make us easy  
here; and enough to make *us wise unto  
Salvation*: And if this will not yield us  
Satisfaction, the same restless Curiosity  
would still disquiet us, if we had the  
Powers and Capacities of Angels: He  
that, with that Degree of Certainty  
which the Scriptures offer him, can be  
an Infidel, or an Immoral Man, does  
not want Knowledge but Inclination;  
It is not, because he cannot, but because  
he will not believe to Purpose. Which  
leads me to consider in the fourth and  
last Place,

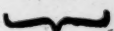
IV. That this as well as all our other  
Knowledge will be utterly lost and use-  
less,

SERM. less, unless it has an Influence upon our  
 VI. Lives; the only Use of Knowledge being, to guide and conduct us to the Land of everlasting Rest.

This is a Proposition so very evident in it self, that nothing but the Corruption and Iniquity of Mankind could make it necessary to be at all insisted upon. Every Body knows, that Heaven was never proposed as a Reward to Wisdom or Learning, and that no Man will be condemn'd to endless Torments for any but wilful Ignorance. It is the Practice of our Duty only, that must make us acceptable to God, however other Endowments may make us valuable in the World. But it is the Misfortune of our most holy Religion, that the Pride and Ostentation of Knowledge has in a manner destroyed the Use of it. If it will but procure Respect and Esteem, People are well enough satisfied with that Reward, and look for no further End in it: Infomuch that, to the Shame and Reproach of Knowledge, it  
 is



*to the Truth of Christianity.* 127

is grown with some into a current Pro-SERM.  
verb, that Ignorance is the Mother of VI.  
Devotion. 

One would think indeed from the Zeal of contending Parties, that they had Religion very much at Heart; but it appears too often from their managing the Debate, that it is in truth the Pride of Victory, the Glory of gaining Profelytes to a Party, which is really the prevailing Motive at their Hearts. But let them remember, that all useful Knowledge, as much as it may seem to be an Attainment of our own, is *indeed the free Gift of God*: A Talent committed to our Custody, for the Benefit of others, as well as of our selves. We must expect to give a strict Account of it, and little will it avail us, when that Account is required, to say, *Lord, in thy Name have we taught and written: In thy Name have we cast out Hereticks*, and vanquished the Enemies of thy Faith; unless it appears at that Great Tribunal, that we have acted like  
Men,

SERM. Men, who believed in earnest, that our

VI. Conduct has been conformable to our  
Knowledge, and that we have approv'd  
our selves Christians, *not in Word  
only, but in Deed and in Truth. Where  
then is the Wise? Where is the  
Scribe? Where is the Disputer of this  
World?* The very least in the Kingdom  
of Heaven is Greater than he. In a  
Word, let every one pursue Knowledge  
as he pleases, but let it not cause him  
to forget Religion. The Desire of  
Knowing is a natural Appetite, and like  
the rest of 'em, not to be extinguished,  
but only regulated and conducted by  
Reason. *Wisdom is the principal thing,  
says Solomon; Therefore get Wisdom, and  
with all thy Getting, get Understanding:*  
But let us remember the Advice of a  
greater than Solomon, *let us hunger and  
thirst after Righteousness too.* This is not  
only the truest Wisdom it self, but like-  
wise the surest Method to gain all the  
other Wisdom we desire. If we will in-  
dulge this Thirst of Knowledge, then  
will

will be our Time to gratify it, when SERM.  
we have the Enjoyment of God's Pre- VI.  
sence in Heaven: When all the Diffi-  
culties that perplex us now, will be  
removed: When our Faculties will be  
more vigorous and active, and instead  
of that short Span of Existence which  
we call Life on Earth, we shall have a  
whole Eternity before us, to go on  
*from Strength to Strength*, and entertain  
our selves with new Discoveries for  
ever.

*Now to God, &c.*





*All Words to be accounted for,  
at the Day of Judgment.*

A

# S E R M O N

On MAT. xii. 36, 37.

*But I say unto you, that every idle  
Word, that Men shall speak, they shall  
give account thereof at the Day of Judg-  
ment.*

*For by thy Words thou shalt be justified,  
and by thy Words thou shalt be condemned.*

SERM.  
VII.



THE Occasion of these Words,  
was an uncharitable Censure,  
which was past upon our Sa-  
viour by the Pharisees, con-  
cerning the Power by which he wrought  
his



*All Words to be accounted for, &c.* 131

his Miracles. Even the Healing of one SERM.  
possess'd with a Devil, which we are told VII.  
he had done (*ver. 22.*) they were so  
unwilling to ascribe to the Finger of  
God, as in all Reason and Justice they  
should have done, that they chose rather  
to impute it, by a most blasphemous  
Suggestion, to the Hand of an infernal  
Agent. *This Fellow*, say they, *doth not*  
*cast out Devils, but by Beelzebub the*  
*Prince of Devils.* To this groundless  
and malicious Calumny, our Saviour  
makes a sharp Reply, shewing, First,  
the manifest Absurdity of the Objection,  
and Secondly, the unpardonable Guilt  
of it: after which he proceeds to ex-  
postulate with his Accusers, concerning  
the Wickedness and Uncharitableness of  
their Hearts, the corrupt Fountain  
from which their Censure flowed, con-  
cluding with these Words which I have  
chosen for my Text, *But I say unto*  
*you, that every idle Word, &c.*

To mollify the seeming Rigour and  
Severity of which Words, the Word in

132 *All Words to be accounted for,*

SERM. the Original, which is rendered *idle*, has

VII.  been explained by some in a very different Sense, as signifying *false* or *wicked*; as if our Saviour had meant, that not of every idle, but of every false or wicked Word that Men shall speak, they shall give Account at the Day of Judgment. But as this, it must be owned, is a very forced Interpretation, so in this Place there is no need to have Recourse to it: the Words containing nothing but what is strictly true, in their plainest and most easy Sense. For whatever is meant by idle Words, it is not said, that they are either damnable or criminal; but only that we shall give Account of them; and so we shall of every Action of our Lives, which nevertheless, by God's Grace, may be so far from condemning us, that they may qualify us in some measure for a Reward in Heaven. It is said indeed in the next Verse, that *by our Words we shall be condemned*: But it is said also, that *by our Words*

*we*

*at the Day of Judgment.*

133

*we shall be justified.* From one of which SERM.  
Assertions it can no more be inferred, VII.  
that by idle Words is meant any thing  
that is wicked, than from the other it  
may be inferred, that by the same Ex-  
pression is meant something that is  
good or virtuous. The Truth is, that  
by the Epithet of *idle*, is meant neither  
Good nor Harm; all that our Saviour  
designed to shew by it, being indeed no  
more than this; that however rashly and  
inconsiderately our Words may fly from  
us, how little soever we may attend to  
their Guilt or Innocence, they will all  
be accounted for at the Day of Judg-  
ment. Unless therefore, to give an Ac-  
count of any thing, does necessarily im-  
ply, that we shall be punished for it,  
there is nothing surely in this Interpre-  
tation, that can reasonably give the least  
Offence. But this is so far from being  
true, that on the contrary, to call any  
one to account supposes that, till that  
Account is given, it is uncertain whe-  
ther he be innocent or guilty.

K 3

Accordingly

134 *All Words to be accounted for,*

SERM. dingly, of all the Servants in the Para-  
VII. ble, that were entrusted with so many  
Talents by their Master, though they  
were all required to account for the Use  
of them, yet there was but one that  
was found faulty in his Conduct.

It is true, that the Occasion of our  
Saviour's Words did lead him to take  
notice, not of idle or inadvertent,  
but of wicked and uncharitable Dis-  
course. But he had done with that be-  
fore: He had said enough concerning  
the Blasphemy of the Pharisees, by tel-  
ling them before, that it *should never be*  
*forgiven them, neither in this World, nor*  
*in that which is to come.* And as no-  
thing was more common with him, in  
other Cases, than to take Occasion from  
any Incident, that had fallen in his  
way, to lay down a Doctrine of a more  
extensive Nature than the Occasion it  
self required, so nothing could be more  
natural in the Case before us, when he  
had spoken to the Point which more  
particularly concerned him, than to take  
Occasion



Occasion from thence to continue his SERM.  
Discourse in more general and compre- VII.  
hensive Terms, telling them, that not  
only every wilful and deliberate, but  
every idle Word that Men should  
speak, they shall give account thereof  
at the Day of Judgment. The Reason  
of which he assigns in the next Verse,  
*viz.* that Words are Things of a moral  
Nature; Things that may render us ei-  
ther innocent or guilty, and conse-  
quently may tend to justify or condemn  
us. *For by thy Words thou shalt be ju-  
stified, and by thy Words thou shalt be  
condemned.*

In my further Discourse on the  
Words before us, I shall

I. Shew the Truth of our Saviour's  
Doctrine, in the Sense wherein I take  
it to have been meant.

II. I shall shew the Reasonableness,  
the Equity and Mildness of God's deal-  
ing with us in this Respect.

III. I shall point out the particular  
Kind of Words, which we have Reason

136 *All Words to be accounted for,*

SERM. son to think will be most regarded, and  
VII. tend most either to justify or condemn  
us.

First, I am to shew the Truth of our Saviour's Doctrine, in the Sense wherein I take it to have been meant.

By *idle* Words we are then to understand, all Words spoken carelessly and inconsiderately, without a due Regard to their immediate Import, or to their natural Consequences and Effects. And whereas it is said, that such Words as these shall be accounted for at the Day of Judgment, by this we are to understand, that these, as well as others, *i. e.* in truth, all our Words in general, shall be laid up against the Time of that solemn Process; that then they shall be produced, and the Nature of them examined, and if there appears to be either Virtue or Vice in them, that Virtue or Vice shall be placed to our Account, and help either to justify or condemn us.

That

That this will be the Case, may appear from this Reason; That it is indeed impossible for any Word we speak, as much as for any Action we perform, to escape the Knowledge or Attention of our Judge. The Reason why we are apt to persuade our selves, that some of our least considerable Offences may pass unheeded, in such a Multitude of Particulars, as will constitute that general Enquiry, is because, if we our selves were Judges, we should be apt, for our own Ease, to neglect them. But far be it from the Thoughts of any of us, to ascribe our own Frailties to the Almighty! The Mind of Man is too impotent and feeble to bear a long Attention to any Thing; much less is it able, at the same Instant of Time, to extend it self to such a Multitude of distinct Enquiries, as are expected at that Time to be considered. It is the peculiar Excellence of the divine Wisdom, that it sees, in one general comprehensive View, whatsoever is past, present,

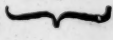
138 *All Words to be accounted for,*

SERM. sent, or to come. To say less than this

VII. of it, is to bound and limit it, and

consequently to make it less than infinite. Since then it is impossible for any Word we speak, to escape the Knowledge and Attention of our Judge, what Reason can there be, why we should not be expected to account for the most idle of them? To say, they are beneath his Notice, is still measuring him by our own short Ideas. They are indeed, in one Sense, infinitely beneath him; and so is every Thing that Man can boast of: Which made the Psalmist cry out, as he did, in an humble Sense of human Frailties and Imperfections; *Lord, what is Man, that thou takest Knowledge of him, or the Son of Man, that thou makest Account of him?* and again, *Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high; who humbleth himself to behold the Things that are in Heaven and Earth?* This indeed, according to the Notions of Men, is a most wonderful and astonishing Condescension. But since he is pleased



pleased to condescend so far, it is no SERM.  
Wonder if he goes something farther; VII.  
the meanest Concerns of human Life   
being as worthy of his Cognizance as  
the greatest; or rather the greatest as  
unworthy as the meanest: And since  
he is not too high to inspect the one,  
there is no Reason why he should over-  
look the other. If the infinite Distance  
between the Creature and the Creator,  
does not hinder him from attending to  
our Behaviour in general, much less  
will the different Importance of our  
Words cause him to neglect those that  
are the least important, since between  
these there is at best but some small  
Disparity, but between him and us there  
is no Proportion at all.

The Truth is, it is not the Impor-  
tance of what we say, that causes it to  
be regarded by Almighty God, but his  
own Sovereign Wisdom and Justice:  
The former of which would be defici-  
ent, if he did not judge, and the lat-  
ter, if he did not punish or reward it.  
To suppose therefore, that any Word  
we

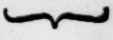
140 *All Words to be accounted for,*

SERM. we speak, that is capable in the least

VII. Degree of being punished or rewarded, will be overlooked at the Day of Judgment, is supposing that for which no Reason can be assigned, but what is injurious to the Honour of God, and argues an Imperfection in his Nature. Upon the whole then, I conclude, that every Word we speak, however lightly and inconsiderately uttered, will make Part of that Account, which is to fix the Sentence, that will make us happy or miserable for ever.

II. The Reasonableness of God's dealing with us in this Respect, is what I am to consider in the next Place. To which End it may be observed, that in Propriety of Speech there is no Difference between Words and Actions; and therefore if it be reasonable we should account for either, it is as reasonable we should account for both. Whatever we may be said to do, may be called an Action; and Speaking therefore among other Things is included. It is performed,

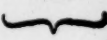
performed, like all other Actions, ex-SERM.  
cept Thinking, by the Help of a bodily VII.

Organ: It is apprehended, like them,   
by one of the Senses, whose immediate  
Object it is, and by the means of which  
it acts upon the Mind, where it pro-  
duces as much Pain and Pleasure, as  
much Good and Evil, as any other Ac-  
tion we can perform. And this it is,  
which constitutes its Morality. What-  
ever may be either mischievous or bene-  
ficial in its Effects, whether it flows  
from an Intention of doing Good or  
Evil, or from a confirmed and settled  
Habit of either, being in its Nature a  
moral Action, and as such, to be either  
punished or rewarded.

Must then every little Error, every  
Slip of Memory, every Flight of Fan-  
cy, every light and every ludicrous Ex-  
pression, *be weighed in the exact Balance  
of the Sanctuary?* No Allowance to be  
made for Frailty, no Room for Mercy?  
But every Word we speak to be strictly  
scann'd by the Rules of impartial Justice?  
And

142 *All Words to be accounted for,*

SERM. And will no Man be acquitted at the  
 VII. Day of Judgment, but he that, in the  
 ~~~~~ Uprightness and Integrity of his Heart,  
 can stand the Test of so severe a Scrutiny? To all these Questions I answer
 once for all, That nothing like this has
 been asserted. That God cannot but
 know every Word we speak, and judge
 it to be what it is, and will actually
 produce it at the Day of Judgment, is
 all that has been yet contended for. And
 it is further probable, that when that
 Day comes, he will call to our Remem-
 brance the whole Conduct of our Lives,
 exhibiting every Part of them so di-
 stinctly to our Observation, that our
 Consciences will readily bear Testimony
 to his Justice, whatever Sentence may
 be pronounced upon us. What Allow-
 ances will be made for our Frailties and
 Infirmities, it is impossible for human
 Wisdom to determine. But this we
 know, that the Justice of God will
 be so tempered and allayed with Mercy,
 that no Man will think he has any Rea-
 son

son to complain, whatever Penalty is SERM.
inflicted on him, but be ready to con- VII.
fess, *that God is not extreme to mark what is* 
said or what is done amiss, being char-
ged with nothing but what he knew to
be a Sin, and which it was absolutely
in his own Power to avoid.

And in Truth, if any one would but
seriously reflect upon the several Offen-
ces of this Kind, which he has com-
mitted, and then ask his Conscience,
whether he could not have been pre-
vailed upon to forbear committing them
by any Motive or Inducement whatso-
ever; there is no doubt but he would
answer in the Affirmative. For where is
the Tongue so licentious and unruly, that
no Profit or Reward can curb it? On the
other hand, if such Offences had been
made capital by the Law, so that Death
had been the sure Reward of them,
where is the Man that in his sober Sen-
ses would have ventured his Life for the
Commission of them? Would not every
Man, for Instance, if this had been the
Case,

144 *All Words to be accounted for,*

SERM. Case, have been as much afraid of Blas-

VII. phemy, as of Treason? of injuring or
assaulting his Neighbour's Character, as
of invading his Person or Estate? I put
these Cases only to make it evident, that
though perhaps it may be extremely
difficult, yet at least it is not absolutely
impossible to abstain from all Offences
of the Tongue. What then could have
been said to impeach God's Justice, if
after he had published and proclaimed
his Will to us, he had insisted upon our
absolute Obedience? But blessed be his
Goodness! we are upon better Terms.
Repentance will wash out much greater
Stains: Much more will it make amends
for those Slips and Failings, which are
too common in our ordinary Discourse,
and which cannot without Care be a-
voided. The Debt indeed will be still
remembred, because it is impossible for
infinite Wisdom to forget it: But Re-
pentance will cancel the Obligation,
so that nothing will be farther requisite
for the Discharge of it. Where then

is

is the Hardship of calling us to account, SERM.
when the Debtor's being sorry for con- VII.
tracting the Debt, will be accepted as
legal Payment? Or where is the Severi-
ty of this Procedure, by which all the
Good we can pretend to, will be brought
to Light, and all the Evil, if we please,
forgiven? The Strictness of the Scruti-
ny, if we are not wanting to ourselves,
will but serve to increase our Happiness,
and at the same time to display the full
Extent of *that Mercy*, which, to make
amends for such a Multitude of name-
less Trespases, will accept of such a
slender Recompense. That therefore
this Recompense may be strictly paid,
where ever it is already due, and be-
come due hereafter in as few Instances
as possible, I proceed to point out in
the

III^d and last Place, the particular
Kind of Words, which we have Rea-
son to think will be most regarded at
the Day of Judgment, and tend most
either to justify or condemn us. I shall

VOL. I.

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begin

146 *All Words to be accounted for,*

SERM. begin with those which must needs
VII. tend to condemn us, which after I have
pointed out, it will appear on the other
hand, what *they* are, which will tend
to justify us; it being well known, that
contrary Causes will always produce
contrary Effects. Now among the
Words that are most criminal and of-
fensive to Almighty God, and conse-
quently most likely to condemn us,
may be reckoned,

I. All blasphemous and profane Dis-
course; by which I mean not only the
Practice of common Swearing, which
can never be too much complained of,
but the many other Ways of dishonour-
ing God's Name, by disrespectful Lan-
guage, by ludicrous Expressions, by
bold, presumptuous, and profane Re-
flections on those things which are re-
lated to him. I need not enlarge on
this horrid Practice; it is too well known,
what Pride and Pleasure some Persons
take in Offences of this Kind, as if there
were Wit in ridiculing an All-wise, or
Courage

Courage in provoking an Almighty SERM.
Being. I will not say, how near a Re- VII.
semblance this Sin has to that of the
Pharisees, which our Saviour tells them,
shall never be forgiven, neither in this
World, nor in that which is to come.
But this I must say: There will come
a Time, when, among the idle Words,
which Men are apt to utter, these Blas-
phemies and Impieties, so wantonly
thrown out, shall make a dreadful and
severe Account, and then they will
confess with Shame and Sorrow, that
there was neither Wit nor Wisdom in
them.

II. But Secondly, another Kind of
Words or Speeches, which will tend to
condemn us at the Day of Judgment,
are those which are apt to corrupt Men's
Manners, and which, though they do not
vindicate and justify Vice, do neverthe-
less help to countenance and support it.
Now this is done, when any wicked Ac-
tion is mentioned with a kind of Plea-
sure and Complacency; when we do not

148 *All Words to be accounted for,*

SERM. rather shew our Abhorrence of it, that
VII. to the best of our Power we may disgrace it. We have lived to see Wick-
edness of every Sort, no longer sheltered and concealed by false Colours, but acting its Part openly and avowedly, confessed by some without Shame or Sorrow, and imputed by others without Censure or Reproach. And where is the Difference, while this is so, whether we are corrupted in our Principles or our Practice? Whether we believe with the bold and profane Blasphemer, that there will never be any After-reckoning to set these Matters right, or whether we are so bewitched with the Allurements of Sense, that we never consider whether it will be so or not, but are resolved to stand the Chance of what may happen then, and in the mean time to enjoy our Vices? To which most miserable and dreadful Infatuation, there is nothing, to be sure, that can more effectually conduce, than this Custom of representing Vice in such
amiable

amiable and inviting Colours, as if it SERM.
were attended with neither Guilt nor VII.
Infamy. And well therefore does it
deserve the Sentence pronounced against
it: *Wo unto them that call Evil Good,
and Good Evil; that put Darknes for
Light, and Light for Darknes, that put
bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.*
Thus to destroy the Distinctions between
Vice and Virtue, by confounding Things
that are contrary to each other, being
doubtless the best and most effectual
Method to bring Vice into Credit and
Repute.

III. But Thirdly, another Kind of
Words or Speeches, that will be much
regarded at the Day of Judgment, are
those which are spoken to defraud our
Neighbour, and made use of as the In-
struments of Deceit. Now this is an
Offence the more heinous and provo-
king, because it is an Abuse of the best
Member that we have, by perverting
it from the End for which it was de-
signed, to a Purpose which is directly

150 *All Words to be accounted for,*

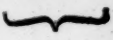
SERM. the Reverse of it. Speech is the distinguishing Excellence of Man compared
VII. with his Fellow-Creatures upon the Earth. It was given him to communicate his Thoughts to others, and to establish such an Intercourse of good Offices among us, as might make us useful and beneficial to each other. Now if, instead of promoting this desirable End, we do, by the Use of either false or prevaricating Expressions, so impose upon the Judgment and Understanding of other Men, that they take Things to be otherwise than they are, and that too, with a Design, by our superior Cunning, to make Advantage of their Ignorance or Credulity, we do manifestly frustrate the Design of our Creator in blessing us with this excellent Endowment. Nor is it at all material, in such a Case as this, that we say nothing but what is strictly true. For if Truth it self be so managed and contrived, as to answer the End of Falshood, it is to all Intents and Purposes a Lye, and

and as such will be considered at the SERM.
Day of Judgment, when the Secrets of VII.
all Hearts shall be opened. But

IV. Fourthly and lastly, another Kind of Words, which ought to be avoided, as very criminal and offensive, are those, which are spoken to defame our Neighbours, and to injure them in their Credit and Repute. This is an Offence so very common in the World, that I fear, there are few who are entirely free from it; and even of those few, who seem to be so, there are some, no doubt, who are not so much concerned about their Neighbour's Character as their own. They would be looked upon, perhaps, as Persons of great Candour, who have too much Conscience to report any thing that is false, and too much Humanity to delight in Censure, if it be true. And indeed this is a Temper so very amiable and engaging, that it is no Wonder if some aim at the Appearance of it, who feel nothing of the generous Sentiments which attend it.

152 *All Words to be accounted for,*

SERM. But the faint Praises of such Men as
VII. these, are as sure an Indication of an
uncharitable Heart, as the worst and
most virulent Reproaches. Their Words
are smother than Oyl, and yet be they
very Swords, wounding the Reputation
of their Friends the more effectually,
under the Colour of being drawn in
their Defence. For if he that professes
himself to be my Friend and Advocate,
does by an aukward Vindication give me
up to Censure, or aggravate the Fault
which is laid to my Charge by an Excuse,
which is the greater Scandal of the two,
what other Construction can be made of
his Behaviour, but that I must needs be
very wicked indeed, since so little can be
said in my Defence by one who seems to
be so willing to defend me? Thus has he
the Character of a good-natur'd Friend,
while he is acting not only an ill-natur'd
and unfriendly, but an ungenerous and
unmanly Part, and is beholden to his
Cowardice for the Success of that
Scandal,

Scandal, which would have lost its Aim, SERM.
and have passed for nothing, if he had VII.
had the Courage more openly to avow 
it.

I have been the more particular in describing this Kind of Censure, because it is of all the most mischievous in its Effect. But numberless are the Arts, which are put in practice by such People, partly to propagate their Scandal the more effectually, and partly to escape the Danger of proclaiming it. Those who are observ'd to be most forward in promoting it, for their own Parts, have more Charity than to believe it; they are sorry for it, though they are glad to publish it, at the same time that they shew, by their affected Backwardness, that they are publishing what they ought to conceal. But it is not my Business to enumerate the Arts of Scandal, which would require almost as much Eloquence as to practise them. Be it sufficient, that I admonish you of the Guilt and Danger of it, in whatever

154 *All Words to be accounted for,*

SERM. ever Form of Words it is conceived:

VII. Which though perhaps it may be so
ordered and contrived, as to do Mischief
without seeming to intend it, will nevertheless at the Day of Judgment be considered in another Light; and all those Artifices and Disguises, which help now to conceal our Guilt, will then serve to aggravate and increase it, by representing us in the Sight of Almighty God both as Slanderers and Dissemblers too.

Thus have I gone through the several Kinds of Words, which will be most likely to condemn us at the Day of Judgment: From which it will be no hard Matter to infer, what those are, which will tend to justify us. We must not only abstain from all blasphemous and profane, all dissolute and immoral, all false and fraudulent, all censorious and defamatory Expressions, but we must likewise strive, in all our Conversation, to promote God's Glory and the Good of Mankind in its most general and comprehensive Sense; *i. e.* we must
not

not only have a strict Regard to their SERM.
Welfare and Reputation in this World, VII.
but must also study to inspire them with

such virtuous Principles, and to make them in Love with such honest Practices, as are likely to promote their Happiness in the next. He that will act this Part with Care, will have but few idle Words to answer for: And he that can act it prudently and discreetly, will soon find so much Pleasure in the Practice of it, that he will have but little Relish for those vain Discourses, which make up the Conversation of the Dissolute and Profane. Such Company therefore let us carefully avoid, or if we are necessarily obliged to engage in it, let us take care not to be infected by their Example: *Let us keep our Mouths as it were with a Bridle, while the Ungodly are in our Sight.* Let us pray to God for his Succour and Defence, that he by the Influence of his preventing Grace, may be pleased to *set a Watch over our Mouths, and keep the Door of our Lips.*

Above

156 *All Words to be accounted for,*

SERM. Above all, let us strive, by repeating our

VII. Endeavours, to fix such an Habit of Virtue in our Hearts, *out of the Abundance of which the Mouth speaketh*, that we may never be tempted to speak contrary to our Duty by any evil Suggestions from within; but be ready upon all proper Occasions, to express such a decent Regard for God's Honour, and such a laudable Zeal for the Interests of Religion, as will naturally flow from a Heart warm with the Love of God, and the Hopes of a Reward in Heaven. Which that we may all receive at the Hands of our righteous Judge, may God of his great Mercy grant, through the Merits of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*.





The Duty of continual Watching.

A

S E R M O N

Preached before the

K I N G ' s House-hold.

M A R K xiii. 37.

*And what I say unto you, I say unto
all, watch.*



OUR Saviour, in the Verses SERM.
which go before my Text, VIII.
had taken Occasion from a
Question put to him by his
Disciples, concerning the Time when
the Destruction of *Ferusalem*, foretold
by him, should happen, to give them

158 *The Duty of continual Watching.*

SERM. a strict Charge to be always ready a-
 VIII. gainst the Coming of the Son of Man;
 meaning, as appears from many Cir-
 cumstances there mentioned, not only
 his first Coming to take Vengeance of
 the *Jews*, by destroying their City, their
 Temple, and their Government, and
 by cutting them off from that visible
 Relation, which they had hitherto born
 to God; but likewise his last Coming
 at the End of the World, to dispense his
 Rewards, and inflict his Punishments,
 pursuant to that Doctrine, which those
 who asked this Question, when they
 came to be enlightened by the Influence
 of the Holy Ghost, were appointed to
 make known unto the World. At the
 End of the Direction, which he gives
 them to this Purpose, he subjoins the
 Admonition in my Text: *And what I*
say unto you, I say unto all, watch, i. e.
 the Advice, which I have now given
 you to be careful, that ye be not sur-
 prized when the Son of Man cometh,
 but may be ready to meet him, and
 without

The Duty of continual Watching. 159

without Fear or Shame give account of SERM.
your Behaviour to him, I do not con- VIII.
fine to the Persons of those Men, whom
I have chosen to my self, as my Instru-
ments or Agents to spread abroad my
Doctrine in the World, and whom
therefore it behoves to be more vigilant
and careful, for the Sake of others, as
well as of themselves; But I would have
it understood as a general Precept, di-
rected to all Persons, that either hear it
now, or may hear it at any Time here-
after, that they may live in Expectation
of that dreadful Day, and be prepared
at all Times to meet it.

This being supposed to be the Mean-
ing of the Words, the particular Care
which our Saviour here takes, to extend
his Precept to all Persons in the World,
that might think it worth while to be
directed by him, should dispose us to
be the more attentive to what he says;
the more willing to enquire, what the
Duty is, and for what Reasons it is so
carefully recommended.

Concerning

160 *The Duty of continual Watching.*

SERM. Concerning the Coming of the Son
VIII. of Man, against which we are here bid
~ to watch, there being, as appears, such
a Latitude of Interpretation, I shall here
suppose, that by these Words we are to
understand, both his Coming to take
Vengeance of the disobedient *Jews*, by
the utter Excision of that Church and
People, and also his second Coming to
judge the World, which, however it
may exceed and surpass the former, as
being a much greater and more general
Concern, will nevertheless, in some Cir-
cumstances, resemble it so nearly, that
our Saviour might design, as it is plain
he does elsewhere, to express both together
in such Words and Phrases, as might
properly be applied to either. And if
this was so, it may not be improper to
consider the Words, so intended by our
Saviour, with a View to both Senses in
their Order.

First then, as these Words were spo-
ken to the *Jews*, in Answer to a Que-
stion, that had been put to our Saviour,
concerning

The Duty of continual Watching. . 161

concerning the precise Time, when that SERM.
dreadful Judgment, which hung over VIII.
their Heads, should be accomplished; ~
an Event which is now past, and which
cannot concern us, any further than
it is a Proof of God's Wrath against
Sinners, and an Instance of that Ven-
geance, which he may be pleased to
execute on any other disobedient and
unthankful People, who continue, like
them, to despise his Laws, notwith-
standing his Goodness to them; I say,
the Words in this View, are no Rule
to us, nor in this Sense are they direct-
ed to us. But because it often happens,
that even temporal Calamities are in-
flicted on us by God's Justice for our
Sins; and no People can be sure, how-
ever prosperous they are now, that this
may not be their Case hereafter; it is
therefore no more than common Pru-
dence in us, to make use of all Cauti-
ons and Admonitions of this Kind, that
can any way be suggested to us; first,
to convince us of the Uncertainty and

162 *The Duty of continual Watching.*

SERM. Instability of every thing, that can be
 VIII. called Happiness among Men; and se-
 condly, to teach us the best Means to
 escape, or else the best Spirit to bear up
 with Patience against every Kind of
 Evil that may befall us. Such was the
 Rule which our Saviour gave the *Jews*,
 to prepare them against the worst and
 sorest Evil, that ever happened to any
 People upon Earth; an utter Subversion
 of their Government and Religion,
 attended with the Loss of their Coun-
 try, or their Liberty, and (what is more)
 of that Favour and Protection from a-
 bove, which, how much soever they
 had slighted it in Prosperity, had always
 been their sure Refuge in Distress. The
 Precept which our Saviour thought fit
 to give them, for the Benefit of those
 few, who might be dispos'd to use it,
 was comprised in one Word, *to watch*,
i. e. to preserve and keep up within them
 such a lively Apprehension of those
 dreadful Judgments, which God's Pro-
 phets had denounced against them, that
 they

The Duty of continual Watching. 163

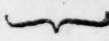
they might do all in their Power to avert SERM.
them from themselves, and to be exemp- VIII.
ted from the common Sufferings of ~~~~~
their Country: not by looking out and
enquiring, as they did, into the Time
when these Things should happen (the
Knowledge of which, instead of quick-
ening their Care, might probably have
caused them to be more dissolute and
remiss, as thinking it Time enough to
reform their Lives, when the Day of
Wrath should draw nearer to them) but
by using their Endeavours to prepare
their Hearts, by watching over them,
by taking heed to their Ways, and by
furnishing themselves with such Virtues
and Graces as might stand them in
some Stead, and prove a Blessing to
them, whenever that Day should come.
Blessed be God! we are not threatened
with Destruction, in like manner as that
People was: But we ought not, there-
fore, to be less upon our Guard, since
no Condition can be secure from Dan-
ger, nor exempt us from that necessary

164 *The Duty of continual Watching.*

SERM. Dependence on God's Providence, which
VIII. is always our best Safety and Defence.

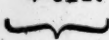
~~~~~ Indeed, the more confident and secure we are, the greater may our Danger prove: for which Reason it was, that *he who thinketh he standeth*, is exhorted by the Apostle *to take heed lest he fall*. And sure I am, that however prosperous and happy our Condition may be *now* justly thought, if we will but reflect on our own Conduct and Behaviour, and consider how little we have deserved these Blessings, and how unthankful, for the most part, we are for them; how much Vanity and Excess, how much Luxury and Riot, how much Envy and Discontent, and Strife and Faction, and how much Wickedness of all Kinds prevails; how the Name of Christ is blasphemed among us; how the Mysteries of our Religion, which should always be held sacred, are prostituted and exposed to Scorn by Infidels; and indeed, how the Principles of common Honesty and Morality,  
how

*The Duty of continual Watching.* 165

how much soever they have been in SERM.  
Theory extolled, have in Fact lost the VIII.  
Credit and Authority they ought to have,   
through the wicked Lives, and debauched  
Practices of Men; I say, if we  
will but seriously consider these Things,  
though we cannot infer from them,  
that God will certainly be provoked to  
punish us by the Infliction of any tem-  
poral Evil, such as that which the *Jews*  
suffered for their Disobedience, yet,  
doubtless, if any publick Calamity  
should overtake us, we shall have Rea-  
son enough to impute it to that Cause,  
and to say, that it is a just Judgment  
for our Sins. And ought not this to  
be a Motive to every pious Christian,  
to every Man indeed, who has his own  
Interest at Heart, to consider with him-  
self, how far he may be concerned, by  
his Want of Zeal to promote the Inte-  
rests of Religion, in raising that Deluge  
of Impiety and Profaneness, which may  
chance to overwhelm his Country? The  
particular Offences of every private Per-

166 *The Duty of continual Watching.*

SERM. son, as they help to fill up the full Measure of Iniquity, which may call down

VIII.  God's Vengeance on our Heads, would doubtless, in the Execution of that Vengeance on us, be imputed to those only who had offended. Those who stood clear of having raised the Storm, would either be delivered from the Destruction it brought with it, or else, if they were involved, as they sometimes are, in the common Ruin which is brought on others, they would find their Hearts so well prepared, so improved in Grace, so armed with Patience, so fortified and secured with Christian Courage, so much animated and inflamed with better Views and Prospects, which the Consciousness of their own Virtue would suggest, that in such a State of things, they would have neither Reason nor Inclination to complain, that they were hardly dealt with.

Such are the Benefits, which may reasonably be expected, with respect to all temporal Calamities and Afflictions,  
from



*The Duty of continual Watching.* 167

from such a Vigilance as is recom- SERM.  
mended in my Text. But this is a VIII.  
View, in which it was proposed to no  
other Persons, but the *Jews*, who were  
then living, and had Reason to expect,  
in Pursuance of many Prophecies, such  
a Judgment to befall their Nation.  
The Sense, in which the Words were  
designed to be understood by all Chri-  
stians in other Ages of the World, has  
Respect to a thing of much more Im-  
portance, a Thing of a much greater  
and more general Concern, no less  
than the Trial of all Nations and Ages,  
all Sects and Parties, all Ranks and  
Orders and Degrees of Men at the Judg-  
ment Seat of *Christ*. This is the last  
Coming of the Son of Man, against  
which all Christians are advised to  
watch, that they may not be unprepa-  
red to meet him. In Pursuance there-  
fore of this useful Doctrine, let us  
next enquire, what it is to *watch*; which  
is a figurative Expression, as it is used  
in this Place, denoting such a Care and  
Attention to our Duty, as becomes Men

# 168 *The Duty of continual Watching.*

SERM. who know they are accountable to God  
VIII. for their Actions, Words and Thoughts.

~ In its common Acceptation it is opposed to *Sleeping*, and imports such a Vigour and Activity of Mind, as may give Motion to the Body, set the Senses at Work, and employ the several Powers and Capacities of the Soul, in such Manner as she directs. It is also made use of as a Term in War, denoting the Office of those Persons, who are appointed to observe, and give Notice of the Enemy's Approach, to those in whose Service they are employed. From these Uses of the Word it is not difficult to discover, in what Sense our Saviour meant it in my Text. As it signifies that active and lively State of Mind, which is necessary to discharge the several Offices of Life, in Opposition to Sleep, which disables us for all Business, locking up the Senses in a State of Indolence and Inactivity, and lulling the Soul to an Inattention and Forgetfulness of every thing which should employ

*The Duty of continual Watching* 169

employ its Thoughts, it does fitly SERM.  
represent that Zeal and Vigour, with VIII.  
which every good Christian should pursue his Duty *to make his Calling and Election sure*; in Opposition to that stupid and drowsy State of Mind, that Lethargy of the Soul, which is exprest in these Words, *Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the Dead, and Christ shall give thee Light.* The careless and indifferent Behaviour of those Men, who are but half practised in the Ways of Virtue, who call themselves Christians, because they were baptized, and think they are good enough, because many are no better, and because some are much worse than they, never labouring and striving, as good Christians should, *to enter in at the narrow Gate to Life*, but content to proceed with the same slothful Steps, with which others have gone on before them, is, we see, in the Notion which the Scripture gives of it, little better than a State of Death; it is no better than  
Sleep,

170 *The Duty of continual Watching.*

SERM. Sleep, in which if they are disturbed  
VIII. by the soft Whispers of God's Voice  
within them, by the Call of his Ministers, by the Thunder of his Judgments, which may startle them for some Time, and awaken them from their Sins, causing them to lift up their Eyes to Heaven to avert God's Vengeance from them, yet they soon relapse and sink down to Rest, unable to sustain that Labour and Fatigue of which the Christian Warfare must consist. How different from this is that Vigilance and Care, that Labour, that Diligence, that Zeal, that Ardour which enflames the Breast of every pious Christian, exciting him to employ the whole Power of his Soul, to exert his whole Strength, to engage all his Passions and Affections, as well as Reason, in the Service of his great Creator; to make the Practice of Religion the main Study and Employment, the chief Pleasure and Delight of Life, never losing Sight of this greatest Good, whatever Business or Recreation, whatever Views and Prospects, what-



*The Duty of continual Watching.* 171

whatever Projects or Designs he has be- SERM.  
sides! This is to watch, this is to be a- VIII.  
wake, this is to perform the great  
Precept in my Text, in the first Sense  
of the Word which was suggested, as  
it stands opposed to that Dulness and  
Inactivity, that Coldness and Indiffe-  
rence to the Practice of all Virtue, that  
stupid, languid, slothful State of Mind,  
which may properly be compared to  
Sleep, and out of which we must first  
be effectually awakened, before we can  
arrive at that Height of Virtue, which  
the Gospel of our blessed Saviour has  
required.

But Secondly, Another Sense of the  
Word, which was suggested, arises from  
the Use of it as a military Term, im-  
porting the Employment of those Per-  
sons, who are appointed to observe and  
give Notice of the Enemy's Approach,  
to those in whose Service they are enga-  
ged. And in this Sense it does very pro-  
perly and significantly set forth the great  
Caution and Circumspection, which the  
good Christian uses in contending with  
his

172 *The Duty of continual Watching.*

SERM. his ghostly Enemies. For indeed in  
VIII. this Conflict, all the Caution we can  
use, as good Men know by very sad  
Experience, is little enough to preserve  
our Virtue from the Snares which are  
laid against it. So great and mighty  
are the Enemies we have to deal with,  
and so impotent withal is the Heart of  
Man, against which all their Engines are  
directed, that without the utmost Care  
and Diligence in our Duty, it is a Post  
that can hardly be defended. I will  
not undertake to point out the Dan-  
gers to which we are particularly ex-  
posed. Bad Men know them by sub-  
mitting to their Force, and good Men  
by the Difficulties they sometimes meet  
with in grappling and contending  
with them. We find by Experience, we  
have a Principle within us, which is too  
apt to take Part against us. We find  
also, that the World has its Traps and  
Snares, to seduce us from the Duty  
which we owe to God, and to tempt  
us into Misery and Ruin. Every Place

we

*The Duty of continual Watching.* 173

we enter, every Company we meet, SERM.  
every Business we undertake, and every VIII.  
Pleasure we pursue; in short, every Ac-  
cident or Occurrence of our Lives,  
whether good or evil, has some Snare  
or other, which it requires some Care  
to shun. In this State of Things, it is  
no Wonder that Religion is represent-  
ed by the Scripture as a State of War:  
A War of the worst Kind, being seated  
in the Heart, where a Siege is carried  
on with so much Art and Cunning,  
that we are too apt to mistake Enemies  
for Friends. Well therefore does the  
wise Man advise us in those Words,  
*Keep thy Heart with all Diligence; for  
out of it are the Issues of Life.* Accord-  
ing as we guard, or expose our Heart  
to the violent Assaults of its Enemies  
from without, and the treacherous Coun-  
sels of its own Lusts within, we shall  
either secure, or give up our Interest in  
the Prospect of everlasting Happiness.  
And in this Sense therefore, as well as  
in the former, must the Precept in my  
Text

174 *The Duty of continual Watching.*

SERM. Text be understood, as advising us to  
VIII. guard, or set a Watch upon our Hearts,  
that they may not be surprized by any  
sudden Onset, nor betrayed by their  
own Lusts and Passions, but may al-  
ways be prepared against every Trial,  
that the Tempter may not find Ad-  
mittance.

To this End, in the last Place, it  
ought also to be observed, that to the  
Care and Vigilance recommended in  
my Text, we should join our Prayers  
to Almighty God to assist us in this ne-  
cessary Work: For *except the Lord keep  
the city, the watchman waketh but in  
vain.* Our Care and Forecast is very  
little worth, if it be not seconded by  
the Providence of God, whose Wis-  
dom alone can defeat the Cunning of  
him who *lieth in wait to deceive.* By  
*watching*, therefore, such a Watchful-  
ness is here meant, as may put us up-  
on using the best Means we can, and  
particularly Prayer, which is the best  
Means of all, to enable us to overcome  
Tempta-



*The Duty of continual Watching.* 175

Temptation. Our Saviour has suffi-  
ciently explained his Meaning in this SERM. VIII.  
Matter, by referring us to his first Di-  
rections, *Take heed, watch and pray:*  
So runs the Precept, *ver. 33.* and so  
therefore we ought here to understand  
it.

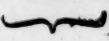
Thus much for the Nature and Ex-  
tent of this Duty : The Motive or In-  
ducement which we have to practise it,  
is delivered to us, *ver. 35.* This I shall  
but just mention, and conclude.

*Watch ye therefore,* says our blessed  
Saviour, *for ye know not when the master  
of the house cometh; at even, or at mid-  
night, at the cock-crowing, or in the  
morning.* The Master of the House is  
Our Lord Himself, whose Coming at  
the Last Day to take Account of his  
Servants, will, to those who shall be  
then living, be so sudden and unex-  
pected; and to those who shall be car-  
ried off by Death, which consigns  
them over to be tried at Christ's Judg-  
ment-Seat, will be so little known, till  
it

## 176 *The Duty of continual Watching.*

SERM. it is actually present, that for the Ter-  
 VIII. rour and Surprize which it shall bring  
 along with it, it is compared to a *Thief's*  
*coming in the Night.* Hence it is, that  
 we are so eagerly exhorted *to watch.* For  
 unless we resolve, whatever else we do,  
 to make our Duty so much the Busi-  
 ness of our Lives, as never wholly and  
 intirely to neglect it, he may come at  
 such a Time, as perhaps we have de-  
 voted to the Commission of some wil-  
 ful Sin: When we think of no-  
 thing less than the doing of our Duty,  
 and preparing to receive our Lord.  
 He may come *at Even*, when our Eyes  
 are heavy; when wearied with the Toil  
 and Fatigue of Virtue, we are insensibly  
 relapsing into Sin and Folly, and are in  
 such a State, that tho' we cannot be said  
 to be quite dead in our Trespases and  
 Sins, yet neither, on the other hand, can  
 it be said we are awake, or enjoy such  
 an active and lively Vigour, as may  
 enable us to appear before him. He  
 may come *at Midnight*, when we are  
 fast

*The Duty of continual Watching.* 177

fast asleep; when we have not one SERM.  
Spark of Religion left; when the Soul VIII.  
is quite sunk, and oppress'd with Sin,   
and deaf to all Calls to Virtue. He  
may come *at the Cock-crowing*, when  
we are hearkening to the Call, when  
we begin to strive to shake off our Slum-  
bers, and awake to a Life of Righteous-  
ness. He may come *in the Morning*,  
when we are but just awake, when we  
have indeed made a shift to recover our  
Understandings, to see the Error we  
were in, and to set about reforming,  
but as yet have not been able to com-  
pleat it. In all these Cases we are un-  
provided: We are not prepared to meet  
our Lord, who, whenever he comes,  
will expect us to be as ready, as if he  
were to come at Noon; when we are  
not only awake, but intent upon our  
Duty, and have bestowed some Pains  
upon the Practice of it. This is the  
State in which he ought to find us, and  
on which alone we can depend with  
any Sort of Certainty, as a thing that

178 *The Duty of continual Watching.*

SERM. will make us acceptable in his Sight.  
VIII. To be relapsing into Sin, to be confirmed and settled in it, to be just awaking to a Life of Virtue, or preparing to enter on it, are Conditions in which no Man would desire to be then found, when he is called to meet his Lord.

To conclude, If any of us has been less diligent in his Duty, less vigilant and watchful than my Text requires: let him resolve to enter on this Duty, not only with new Vigour and Resolutions of Amendment, but also with double Diligence to effect them. Let us not be like the Sluggard described by *Solomon*, who cries out in the Deadness and Slothfulness of his Heart, *yet a little Sleep, a little Slumber, a little more folding of the Hands to Sleep; a little more Indulgence in our Vices and Lusts, and then we will rise and work.* In the mean time perhaps our Master cometh, and findeth us sleeping: And how justly may he complain and ex-  
postulate with us, as he did once with  
his



*The Duty of continual Watching.* 179

his Disciples, *What, could ye not watch* SERM.  
*with me one Hour?* So short a Time as VIII.  
is necessary for your Passage to the Land  
of everlasting Rest? Take heed there-  
fore, *watch and pray: Let your Loyns*  
*be girded about, and your Lights burning:*  
*and ye your selves like unto Men that*  
*wait for their Lord: Blessed are those*  
*Servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh,*  
*shall find watching.* Verily, says our  
Saviour, *He shall gird himself, and make*  
*them sit down to Meat, and come forth*  
*and serve them; and if he shall come in*  
*the second Watch, or come in the third*  
*Watch, whenever he comes and finds them*  
*so, blessed are those Servants.*

*Now to God the Father, &c.*





*The true Nature and End of Fasting.*

A

# S E R M O N

*Preached at White-Hall.*

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MATT. ix. 15.

*And Jesus said unto them, Can the Children of the Bride-Chamber mourn, as long as the Bridegroom is with them? But the Days will come, when the Bridegroom will be taken from them, and then shall they fast.*

SERM.  
IX.



OUR Saviour in these Words makes Answer to a Question, put to him by the Disciples of John the Baptist, concerning religious Abstinence or Fasting. By the

the Law of *Moses* some Fasting was re-<sup>SERM.</sup>  
quired; and the Pharisees, who were <sup>IX.</sup>  
strict Observers of that Law, especially  
of the outward Forms of it, had extended  
his Precept to a far greater Length;  
observing not only that solemn Fast, on  
which they were required to *afflict their*  
*Souls*, by the positive and expresse Will of  
God, but also many others of their own  
Appointment, no less, it seems, than  
two Days in seven being dedicated to  
this Purpose by them. The Reason of  
this, as we learn from Scripture, was  
partly their ignorant and superstitious  
Zeal, inclining them to think, that such  
Acts as these had something meritorious  
in them; and partly their Hypocrisy  
and Pride of Heart, disposing them to  
make a Shew of great Sanctity and De-  
votion, to be admired and esteemed of  
Men. The Disciples of *John* were Men  
of better Principles: *They* fasted often,  
but for better Reasons, such as were  
suggested by their Master to them, who  
was a Man of very strict and rigid Mo-  
rals,

SERM. rals, and a great Example of that Ab-

IX. stinence and Self-denial, which was co-

~  
pied with so much Exactness by his  
Followers. Our Saviour, on the other

hand, who lived much in publick, ap-  
peared to be less mortified and severe.

He mixed in all Companies; bore a

Part in their Entertainments; sat down

at their Tables; was present at their

Marriage Feasts, and ready to comply

with all decent Freedoms that Custom

had introduced amongst them. The

Pharisees from hence took Occasion to

accuse him in very harsh and disrespect-

ful Terms: *Behold, say they, a Man*

*gluttonous, and a Wine-biber, a Friend*

*of Publicans and Sinners.* The Disciples

of *John* were more moderate in their

Expressions; tho' they also thought

that in this Point he was defective, and

could not be persuaded, that this Cheer-

fulness of Behaviour was consistent with

that high Degree of Purity and Perfec-

tion, which he seemed by all his Doc-

trines to profess. With these Thoughts

about



about them they apply themselves to SERM.  
him in the Verses which go before my IX.

Text; *saying, why do we and the Phari-*

*sees fast often, but thy Disciples fast not?*

*i. e.* Why are thy Disciples so singular  
in their Practice? Why are they distin-  
guished, not only from us, but likewise  
from all others that we have ever heard  
of, who pretend to any great or extraor-  
dinary Degree of Sanctity, as the Pha-  
risees are well known to do? Why do  
they, whose Righteousness is in some  
Respects required to exceed the Righteous-  
ness of the Scribes and Pharisees, appear  
to fall so much short of them in this?  
Or how can they pretend to so much  
Piety and Devotion, when in this  
Instance they are so defective in  
it?

To this our Saviour answers in the  
Words of my Text: *First*, by a Questi-  
on, *Can the Children of the Bride-chamber*  
*mourn, while the Bridegroom is with them?*  
And *Secondly*, by a positive and exprefs  
Assertion: *But the Days will come, when*

SERM. *the Bridegroom shall be taken from them*

IX. *and then shall they fast.*

For the better understanding of which Words, it should be observed, that the strict Relation which *Christ* bears to his Church, is figuratively represented in the Word of God by the Union between a Husband and his Wife. *The Husband*, says St. Paul, *is the Head of the Wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church.* In Allusion to this Figure, or *Mystery*, as St. Paul calls it, the Time that was employed by our blessed Saviour in laying the Foundation of his Church here on Earth, may very properly be considered as his Nuptials; because it was the Time when his Bride was espoused to him; the Time when he took upon him the Character of a Husband, and contracted this new Relation to the Church.

In this View it is, and with Reference to this Notion, that our Saviour here calls himself *the Bridegroom*: His Disciples for the same Reason are called *the Children of the Bride-Chamber*, i. e. as  
the

the Words have been most commonly SERM.  
explained, the Bridegroom's Friends IX.  
employed by him in assisting at the  
nuptial Ceremony: or, as perhaps they  
might be better understood, the Bride her  
self; for such the Church was; and of  
whom did the Church at that Time  
consist, but the very Disciples concerning  
whom he speaks?

The Propriety of the Expression in  
this latter Sense, may be justified by a  
Figure much used by the Eastern Wri-  
ters, and of which there are many In-  
stances in holy Writ. Thus those that  
rebelled, are called *the Children of Rebel-*  
*lion*, *Numb. xvii. 10.* Those who com-  
mit Iniquity, are called *the Children of*  
*Iniquity*, *2 Sam. iii. 34.* *1 Chron. xvii. 9.*  
Proud Men by the same Figure, are  
called *the Children of Pride*, *Job xli. 34.*  
And those who were appointed or con-  
demned to die, are by *David* called  
*the Children of Death*, *Psalms cii. 20.*  
Those who were disobedient, are called  
*the Children of Disobedience*, *Eph. ii. 2.*  
and

SERM. and because for this they are exposed

IX. to the Wrath of God, they are in the  
 next Verse called *the Children of Wrath*.

And to instance but once more, those who place their Trust, and have their Portion in this present World, are by our Saviour called *the Children of this World*, Luke xvi. 8. And those who are intitled by their virtuous Actions to an *Inheritance among the Saints in Light*, are in the same Place called *the Children of Light*. Thus we see that, in Conformity to the Genius of that Language which was spoken by our blessed Saviour, those who were then wedded to their Lord and Master, and to whom therefore *the Bride-chamber* belonged, might, as such, be called *the Children of the Bride-chamber*. And these were the Disciples, of whom the Church consisted, who were the only Persons that had a Right to be considered as the mystical Spouse of *Christ*.

The Import therefore of our Saviour's Answer is this: *Can the Children of the Bride-*



*Bride-chamber, i. e.* can my Disciples, SERM.  
espoused to me by a spiritual Rela- IX.  
tion, be expected to *mourn*, to afflict  
their Souls, or be in a Disposition to  
keep voluntary Fastings, while I their  
Bridegroom continue with them? Shall  
the Presence of a Husband banish Care  
and Sorrow, and shall not my Presence  
have the same Effect? The Time will  
soon come, when I must leave them to  
themselves, and then will they have  
Cause to *mourn*: Then will they fast  
and afflict their Souls, then will they  
practise the severest Duties, as well, you  
will find, and perhaps better too, than  
either you, or the strictest Pharisee.  
In the mean time it is my Pleasure to  
indulge them for a little while, and to  
exempt them from the Burden of those  
harsher Duties, which then they will  
see Cause to practise. *The Days will  
come, when the Bridegroom shall be taken  
from them, and then shall they fast.*

This being, I think, the true Im-  
port of the Words, it ought to be ob-  
served,

SERM. served, that our Saviour's Answer relates

IX. only to such Fasts as were free and  
voluntary, such as they observed and imposed upon themselves, without any Warrant or Authority from the Law. For all Things contained in the Law of *Moses*, our Saviour himself, as might be shewn in many Instances, and his Disciples also, while he lived among them, were in all Points very careful to observe. After his Ascension Christianity commenced, and then much of the Law of *Moses* was abolished. But as long as he lived, neither He, nor They, ever held themselves excused from the strict Performance of any thing which was there required: From whence we may conclude, that the Disciples of *John* were either ignorant what the Practice of our Saviour was, and seeing that his Disciples did not fast when they did, concluded falsely that they did not fast at all; or else, when they put this Question to him, meant only to ask, why his Disciples did not fast so often as either the Pharisees or themselves:

selves: Why he did not teach and in-  
 struct his Followers, as their Master had  
 taught and instructed them, and as  
 the Pharisees also had taught their  
 Disciples to keep other Fasts of their  
 own appointing, besides that which  
 the Law of *Moses* had enjoined.  
 The keeping of that which the Law of  
*Moses* had enjoined, was a Thing in  
 which they all agreed. The only Que-  
 stion was, why our Lord's Disciples  
 were not taught by him to observe the  
 same Days, and to be as regular and  
 constant in the Practice of this Duty, as  
 the Disciples of *John* and of the Pha-  
 risees: who, besides that Fast which was  
 instituted by *Moses*, observed others al-  
 so of their own voluntary Motion,  
 which they were not bound by the Law  
 of *Moses* to observe.

Secondly, we should take Notice,  
 that of these voluntary Fasts, our Savi-  
 our does not say they are superstitious  
 in their own Nature, but only that they  
 were unseasonable for his Disciples.  
 While he lived among them, there was

no

SERM.  
IX.

SERM. no Room for Sorrow. The Presence

IX. of their Master was such a Blessing to them, that it could not but dispose them, instead of mourning and lamenting, to *rejoice and be exceeding glad*. And considering the Afflictions they were afterwards to undergo, he was pleased for a Season to indulge them in this Joy, leaving them to be instructed, when the Holy Ghost should come upon them, in what Manner they were to sorrow for their Sins. In the mean time he was not wanting, by his Doctrine and Example, in any thing that might teach them what their Duty was in general, with respect to these Acts of Sorrow. Forty Days and forty Nights did he fast for their Sakes, teaching them thereby, that such Abstinence as they could bear, was very proper at some Seasons to be observed. And it is further observable, that in his Sermon on the Mount, which consists of Rules on the most important Subjects, he has not omitted to give Directions to his Disciples



ciples about the Practice of private Ab-SERM.  
 stinence or Fasting. For that what he IX.  
 there says, has no Regard to their Be-  
 haviour at the Time of publick Absti-  
 nence, the very Nature of the Pre-  
 cept shews; directing them when they  
 fasted, to conceal it from the World,  
 and to be as private in the Practice of  
 it, as they could. To this may be ad-  
 ded what our Saviour says here; *The*  
*Days will come, when the Bridegroom*  
*shall be taken from them, and then shall*  
*they fast, i. e.* they shall not only observe  
 that Fast which, in Obedience to the  
 Law of *Moses*, they observe already, but  
 also such Fasts, as are meant in your  
 Question, such Days of Abstinence as  
 you prescribe to your selves, and which  
 therefore they may observe at whatso-  
 ever Seasons they shall judge most pro-  
 per for them. And this leads me

Thirdly, to another Observation,  
 which is, That our Saviour, though he  
 does not discommend, but countenance  
 and encourage such religious Abstinence,

as

SERM. as has nothing in it of Superstition on

IX. the one hand, nor of Ostentation and

— Vain-glory on the other, yet does not by these Words, nor indeed by any other, set apart either this, or any other Season for the Practice of this serious Duty. It has indeed been argued from these Words by some, that our Saviour designed to lay a strict Injunction on his Disciples themselves, and all Christians after them, to keep a stated Fast at that Season of the Year, *when the Bridegroom should be taken from them.* To this they have added, by another Inference from the Example of our blessed Saviour, who fasted forty Days and forty Nights in the Wilderness, that this anniversary Fast, supposed by them to be prescribed to all Christians in my Text, ought to be for the same Space of Time. And on one of these Notions, or on both together, is that Doctrine founded in the Church of *Rome*, which supposes us, at this Season of the Year particularly, to be obliged to such

an Abstinence from some Kinds of SERM.  
Food, that to fail in it is a mortal Sin. IX.

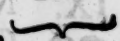
As to that Opinion, which so rigorously restrains us from the Use of some Kinds of Food, allowing us with great Liberty to indulge in others, it is too absurd to deserve an Answer. At present let us stick to the Subject we are upon. And *first*, with Regard to the Example of our Saviour, if from hence it be inferred, that because he fasted forty Days, we also ought to fast for the same Space of Time, it is sufficient to reply, we cannot. Our natural Appetites of Thirst and Hunger will confute this Notion for us. His Example indeed may be an Argument sufficient to recommend to us Fasting in general: And so far it may be useful to us. But if once we come to fancy that the Circumstances of Christ's Fasting must be a Precedent and Rule for ours, we are tied up to all Circumstances alike. For what Right has one to be so strictly followed, while another is neglected

SERM. by us? We cannot fast in the same

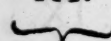
IX. Manner that he did: Why then for the  
same Space of Time? If it be said, that we are bound to follow his Example in every Circumstance that can be imitated by us, why do we not retire, as he did, to a Wilderness? The Circumstance of Place is a Matter of as much Consequence, as the Circumstance of Time can be: Nay indeed of more; for Solitude and Retirement in such a desolate Scene as *Christ* chose to fast in, may perhaps help to wean and disengage us from the World, as much as even Abstinence it self; whereas the Circumstance of Time, a Day less or more in the Number of Days which are devoted to this Purpose, cannot sure have any great Effect. But it is not pretended that to imitate our Saviour, it is necessary to seek a Wilderness or Desert. Why then should it be supposed, that in Compliance with his Example, it is necessary to fast forty Days? Secondly, with respect to that other No-

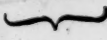
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tion, that our Saviour has enjoined us SERM.  
 in the Words of my Text, to keep a IX.  
 stated Fast at that Season of the Year,   
 when he suffered and expired upon the  
 Cross, this is more than our Saviour  
 meant by them. His Design was to  
 shew, that when he was gone, his Dis-  
 ciples *in those Days should fast*. He  
 does not say, what Season of the Year,  
 nor what Number of Days should be  
 observed. And indeed if any Season  
 had been appointed in these Words, to  
 be observed as a Time of publick Ab-  
 stinence, it could not but have been a  
 different Season from that which is,  
 in Fact, at this Time observed. Had  
 our Saviour's Words been understood  
 by his Disciples, as a strict Injunction  
 to keep a solemn Fast, beginning at  
 the Time of his being taken from them,  
 they would not have fasted, till he was  
 crucified at least, nor probably till he  
 ascended into Heaven, at which Time  
 he took his last Farewel of them, and  
 from thenceforth was to visit them no

SERM. more. Had this been done, and con-

IX. tinued yearly from either of the above-mentioned Periods, the forty Days of *Lent* must either have begun about the Time where now they end, or forty Days later still: For so long he continued to converse with his Disciples between the Time of his Resurrection and Ascension. And from hence it is clear, that the Custom of keeping Fast for forty Days before the Festival of *Easter*, is neither founded on the Words of our Saviour in my Text, nor on the Practice of his first Disciples. But then withal it must be observed to its Advantage, that it is a Practice of very ancient Date, much sooner than the Times when the Leaven of Popery began to poison and infect the Church, and was probably begun early by the *Jewish* Converts, whose Custom it had been to observe forty Days to prepare them for the great Fast of Expiation. But whatever it was that gave Rise to it at first, it has ever since been continued

tinued in the Church, and is appoint-<sup>SERM.</sup>  
ed to be observed by our own Church IX.  
in particular, with whose Rules and   
Ordinances, as long as we continue  
Members of it, it is without Question  
our Duty to comply. This Church  
hath limited a certain Number of Days,  
the same that hath generally, tho' not  
constantly, been observed by all Chri-  
stians in other Ages of the World, to  
be employed in such Acts of Humi-  
liation and Abstinence as are likely to  
help forward our Repentance, leaving  
it to every Person to practise it, or dis-  
pense with it, as his bodily Health, his  
worldly Business, or the Occasions of  
his Soul require. And on this Foot it  
is, even the Authority of our Superiors,  
who have limited the Time to be em-  
ployed in this Duty, that our Obliga-  
tion to observe it stands.

These are the Observations I had to  
offer upon my Text; it remains only  
in the *last* Place, for the better Im-  
provement of this holy Season, to con-

SERM. sider the Nature of religious Abstinence  
 IX. in general, and how far we are obliged  
 to practise it.

The Act of Fasting, or abstaining from Food, considered by it self, without regarding the Cause of it, or the End we propose to gain by it, has nothing in it either good or evil. He that abstains for want of Appetite to eat, does a thing which is perfectly indifferent in it self, and can be called neither Vice nor Virtue. He that fasts with a Design to starve, to throw away the Life it hath pleased God to give him, and which therefore he is bound to preserve and keep, till it shall please the great Giver to resume it, does an evil Action, because the End is evil, it being done with Design to commit Murder on himself, which is an Action that he cannot justify. He that fasts to give his Bread unto the Hungry; he that denies himself his own natural Food, to save the Life of his Fellow-Creature that is starving, performs a good Action, because



because his End is good, forasmuch as SERM.  
he does it with a charitable Design, IX.  
which makes it a true moral Virtue. ~

Thus we see that Fasting may be good or evil, or it *may* be neither, but a Thing perfectly indifferent, according to the End proposed by it. The Question then is, what End we should propose, what Motives or Inducements ought to influence our Minds to make Fasting a religious Act. To set this Matter in the plainest Light: It is natural for Men under great Afflictions, when their Hearts are loaded and oppressed with Sorrow, to refuse all the Pleasures and Delights of Life, which they are glad at other Seasons to enjoy. Particularly they are apt to forsake their Food, and to have little Appetite or Inclination to it. Whatever is the Cause of such inward Sorrow, whether it be any worldly Calamity or Affliction, or whether it be the Sense of any Guilt contracted, and the Fear of being pu-

SERM. nished for it, will of course produce

IX. this Effect, and in proportion as our

Grief is more and greater, this Aversion will be more violent and intense.

So that Fasting, we find, or abstaining from Food, is a natural Expression or Indication of our Grief, from whatever Cause or Motive it proceeds. When-

ever it proceeds from any worldly Motive, it is with respect to the Favour of God, a thing of no Consequence at all. But when it springs from a spiri-

tual and godly Sorrow, from a Sense of having sinned and offended God, and

a constant Uneasiness hanging over our Minds, till we are reconciled and have

made our Peace with him, then it is an Act acceptable and well pleasing to

him, not by any Virtue or Efficacy of its own (for surely he is not pleased to

see his Creatures miserable) but for the Sake of the good Principle it proceeds

from. And this, it is probable, was what gave the first Rise to the Custom

of

of endeavouring to avert God's Ven- SERM.  
geance by this Method of religious Ab- IX.  
stinence or Fasting. 

But secondly, When Men began to practise this, they soon found the Benefit and Advantage of so doing, by the good Effects and Consequences which flowed from it. That which proceeded from the first Motions of Repentance, did at last help to perfect and compleat it. Those Passions and Affections, which caused Men to commit Sin, were by much Abstinence so mortified and subdued, that for the future they had no Desire to commit it. The Flesh became weak, and the Spirit gathered Strength, and they found their Minds in a better Frame and Disposition for the Practice of all serious Duties. The Benefit of Abstinence being thus discovered, it began to be considered and observed by Men, as a proper Way to help forward their Repentance; and those who were sorry for  
their

SERM. their past Offences, and sincerely desir-

IX. ous to forsake them for the Time to  
 ~~~~~ come, had Recourse to this Method, to  
 subdue their Lusts, and to raise their
 Affections from all sensual Delights, to
 a true Relish for more spiritual En-
 joyments. And here again the Prin-
 ciple, upon which it was performed,
 recommended it to God's Favour and
 Acceptance; not as a Duty that was
 necessary in it self, but as a good
 Way to promote Piety and Virtue,
 and as springing from a real and sin-
 cere Desire to forsake every thing dis-
 pleasing to him.

These, I think, are the only true
 Grounds on which Fasting can be
 considered as a religious Act: And
 from hence it will be easy to disco-
 ver, in the last Place, how far we
 are obliged to practise it. It is not
 a Duty that is necessary for its own
 Sake, it is not in it self acceptable
 to God, but as it naturally accompa-
 nies

shews a sincere Repentance, and is a SERM.
good Way to further and promote IX.
it. It is therefore to be ranked in
the Number of those Duties, which
are called auxiliary or instrumental
Duties, which are to be considered
as Means to some End, and which
therefore are practised so far, and no
farther, than they are necessary to
attain that End. So far as Fasting
is the Effect of Repentance, Men
will fast of course, either more
or less, in Proportion to their in-
ward Sorrow. But so far as it is
a Means to bring about Repentance,
it ought to be performed with a
View to that End, and can never
be said to be done duly and suffi-
ciently, till that End is accomplish-
ed by it. Here then is the Rule
by which we ought to act, we must
fast so long till this End is answer-
ed; till the Flesh is subdued, and
made subject to the Spirit, and we
have

SERM. have lost all Desire and Inclination
IX. to those Vices which we used to
take most Delight in. Nothing can
be called a religious Fast, that has
not this Effect upon us, and there-
fore when such Fasts are observed at
all, thus far we are obliged to keep
them.

*Now to God the Father, Son, and
Holy Ghost, &c.*





*A Man's Christian Name
his best Title.*

A

S E R M O N

On I COR. i. i.

*Paul called to be an Apostle of Jesus
Christ.*



THESE Words, or others to SERM.
the same Effect, are the com- X.
mon Introduction to most of
those Epistles which were
written by the great Apostle St. Paul.
Their Design was to shew both his Name
and Office, the former setting forth
who it was that wrote them, and the
latter

SERM. latter, by what Authority they were

X. written. In both there is something
 { that may be worth observing; but as
 the Subjects are perfectly distinct from
 each other, at present I would discourse
 only of the former.

It is obvious to observe, that the
 Name of our Apostle, as written by
 himself here, and in the rest of his
 Epistles, is somewhat different from that
 which he had from the Beginning, and
 which was given him by his *Jewish*
 Parents. By them he was called *Saul*,
 and by that Name alone he seems to
 have been first known among his Coun-
 trymen the *Jews*; nor does it appear
 from Scripture, that he was called by
 any other, till after the Time when, by
 God's Appointment, he was set apart to
 preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. After
 this he is once mentioned by the same
 Name again; but with this Remark, that
 he was also called *Paul*; which Name he
 takes upon him, and is so styled by
 others, wherever he appears afterwards
 in holy Writ.

It

It may perhaps be thought a very SERM.
needless Disquisition, and of very little X.
Benefit to the Christian Hearer, How

it came to pass that this Change was made, and at what Time, or for what Reasons it was done. But let not this be any Prejudice against it. For as the moral Parts of this Apostle's Writings abound with Precepts and Instructions of several Kinds, very necessary to be understood by Christians; so even the historical and circumstantial Passages are far from being useless Parts of them. His Cloak, his Parchments, and other private Matters, which some have been pleased to make the Subject of their Mirth, have afforded the considerate and attentive Reader proper Matter for his more serious Thoughts. Useful Points of Doctrine have been sometimes raised from them, and practical Applications made of them.

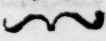
Now when Subjects of this Kind, by being opened and explained, become serviceable to any Purpose of Religion,
there

SERM. there is this further Benefit resulting from

X. them, that every Instance of this Kind
 helps to answer that Objection, which represents the Text of Scripture as in some Places frivolous, by shewing, that to a Mind disposed diligently *to read them, to learn, to mark, and inwardly to digest them*, there is nothing to be found in those sacred Writings, so barren as to afford no Instruction.

This being premised, I beg leave at present, with a View to some practical Observations that will rise from it, to make a few Remarks on the Name of our Apostle, with the Reason of its being changed, by the Alteration of a Letter from *Saul*, which was the Name by which he went among the *Jews*, to *Paul*, which is the Name written in my Text.

It is supposed by some, but without sufficient Grounds, that this Change was made by God's own Appointment, that he might not, says *St. Chrysostom* on the first Chapter to the *Romans*, be
 in

in this respect inferior to any other of SERM.
 the Apostles, but enjoy the same Ho- X.
 nour, by which the chief of them, 
 St. *Peter*, had before been distinguished
 by his Master. That St. *Paul* did enjoy
 as many great Advantages, in Point of
 Honour and Authority in the Church
 of Christ, as St. *Peter*, or any other of
 the Apostles, is a certain Truth, which
 those who have had an Interest in rai-
 sing St. *Peter*'s Character in Diminution
 to the rest, have not been able by any
 Argument to disprove. But that the
 Changing of his Name could be done
 with this View, or that any such Pur-
 pose could be answered by it, it is not,
 I think, easy to understand.

For *First*, had the Name of *Peter*,
 which Christ gave to *Simon*, been de-
 signed to convey to him any such Pre-
 cedence, as this Opinion supposes him
 to have had, it is highly improbable,
 that the Authority which did this, would
 have taken any Method to defeat it self,

SERM. by raising another to the same Level
X. with him.

Secondly, It is not true, that the new Name bestowed on him was designed to give *Peter* any such Precedence; which is a thing that, to support the Church of *Rome's* Supremacy, has since, for worldly Reasons, been ascribed to him. How then could the changing our Apostle's Name be designed to place him on the same Level with *St. Peter*, when even *St. Peter* had, by Virtue of that Name, obtain'd no such Pre-eminence himself?

Thirdly, In these Cases there is no true Resemblance. The Person who was distinguished by the Name of *Peter*, did not lose thereby the first Name he bore; but retained it with a new Name annexed to it: and with such a Name, as was significant of the Reason for which it was conferred upon him. *Thou art Peter*, says his blessed Master, *and on this Rock will I build my Church*, alluding to the Word, which imports

imports a Rock in that Language from SERM.
which the Name was taken. What is X.
there like this in the Case now before
us? The Name of *Saul*, which our
Apostle had before, was not kept or
retained, as that of *Simon* was, but lost
and swallowed up in *Paul*: nor is the
Name of *Paul*, which was substituted
in its Room, expressive of any singu-
lar Advantage or Pre-eminence, which
this Opinion in the other Case suppo-
ses, but a Name in common Use, and
well known among the *Romans*, so far
from asserting any Dignity to its Own-
er, that some, deriving it from a Word
signifying in that Language *little*, sup-
pose the Apostle took it in the Humi-
lity of his Soul, to testify the Sense he
had of his own Meanness and Unwor-
thiness, agreeable to that Profession
which he makes elsewhere of himself,
that he was in his own Account *the*
very least of the Apostles, not so much
as meet to be called an Apostle, because
he had persecuted the Church of God.

SERM. *Lastly*, For this Opinion there is no

X. Warrant in holy Writ: Yet the thing
 is in it self of so remarkable a Nature,
 that if true, it could not well have
 been omitted. The very Reason, for
 which it is supposed to have been done,
 is a Reason also, why it ought to have
 been recorded: as it would effectually
 have destroyed the very Ground and
 Foundation of those false Pretensions to
 universal Monarchy, by which the
 Church of *Rome* has established its Do-
 minion over the Consciences and Souls
 of Men. Not that we want Argu-
 ments to confute that Claim, which
 has nothing but a Train of Falshoods
 for its Support. But had God been
 pleased to declare in Scripture, that this
 Apostle's Name had been so changed by
 him, on purpose to shew, that in no Re-
 spect at all St. *Peter* was superior to him,
 this would have been an Argument so
 demonstrative and convincing, as to
 have cut off the very Claim it self. If
 no Evidence appears, that such a thing
 was

was done, there is no arguing that it SERM.
was done, from its Usefulness and Ex- X.
pedience for the Conviction of those
by whom the Claim was made: But if
it had been done, he who did it with
this View, and must needs foresee that
such a Claim there would be, could not
fail, for the same Reason, to have pre-
served its Memory for the Benefit of
succeeding Ages. *St. Paul* had Cause
enough, in Vindication of himself against
those who would have sunk his Cha-
racter, to magnify his Office, by insist-
ing on his Equality with the rest of his
Fellow-labourers in the Gospel. He
tells the *Corinthians*, that as little as he
was, *in nothing he was behind the very
chiefest Apostles*; yet never does he in-
sist on this Evidence in Support of it,
which, if true, was the best Argument
he could have used.

This Opinion therefore having no
Foundation, Others, to account for
this Matter, have supposed, that the
Apostle had been accustomed to both

SERM. Names from his Childhood : That one

X. of them might be given him, at the
Time of his Circumcision, to intimate
his Descent from the same honourable
Tribe with *Saul* the first King of *Israel*;
and that the other, which was a Name
in common Use among the *Romans*,
might be given him, to shew that he
was entitled by his Birth to the Privi-
leges of a *Roman* Citizen. One of
these Privileges we find him pleading
for himself, in the Twenty second Chap-
ter of the *Acts*, where he asks the Cen-
turion, who was about to scourge him,
whether it was lawful to scourge a Man
that was a Roman ; a *Roman* by Birth,
as he tells the Tribune afterwards, pro-
bably because his Parents, tho' *Jews*
themselves, had, in Recompense for some
Services which they had done the State,
been admitted to that honourable Title.
Others have thought, because the Name
of *Paul* is never mentioned in Scrip-
ture, till that memorable Account of
his striking *Elymas* the famous Sorcerer
with

with Blindness, thereby converting the SERM.
Governor of the Place, whose Name X.
was *Sergius Paulus*, to Christianity, that
St. Paul took upon him, in Memory
of that Action, the Name of the Ro-
man Governor he had converted.
Others understand, that the Name of
Saul, being a *Jewish* Name, and very
little heard of among the Gentiles he
was sent to preach to, they changed it
into *Paul*, which was better known to
them, in like manner as he, who was
Jesus among the *Jews*, was called a-
mong the *Grecians* *Jason*. Many other
Instances of like Nature are produced,
by which it appears, that Names in
one Language have been often thus
changed to a Word of like Sound, to
render them more agreeable to another:
and from hence it is inferred, that this
may be the Case with respect to the
Name now before us.

It is not material among these Opi-
nions, which of them is most likely to
be true. But this may be observed,

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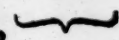
that

SERM. that whatever be the Case, whether the

X. Name of *Paul* was taken up by himself, or whether it was first given him by others, it is the Name by which he chose to be known as an Apostle, having generally prefixt it to those Epistles, which were written by him both to Churches, and to private Persons. And for this, I think, three Reasons may be assigned.

One is, because by God's own Appointment he was set apart to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, among whom there is no Doubt, but a Gentile Name must needs be more agreeable, than a *Jewish*. He therefore, who would lose no Advantage that was offered to recommend and enforce his Doctrine, might naturally be led to make use of that Name, which he found would be most acceptable among them.

If this may be allowed, it will help to solve the Difficulty, which lies against the Notion that the Epistle to the *Hebrews* was the Work of this great Apostle.

postle. To this it is objected, that if SERM.
he had been its Author, he would most X.
 probably have prefixed his Name to it, 
 which was his constant Custom in the rest
 of his Epistles; and therefore since it is
 not so prefixed to this, it is not
 likely to have been written by him.
 But now if it be supposed, that one
 Reason, among others, which induced
 this Apostle to wear a Gentile Name,
 was to render himself more acceptable
 to the Gentile World, and to gain his
 Doctrine a more favourable Reception;
 this might be a thing so disobliging to
 the *Jews*, that he might purposely omit
 it in his Address to them, to prevent
 the Prejudice that it might have raised
 against him. That this was his Prin-
 ciple, and his Practice in like Cases, he
 himself informs us in this Epistle to the
Corinthians. *For tho', says he, I be free*
from all Men, yet have I made my self
a Servant unto all, that I might gain
the more. And unto the Jews I became
as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews;
to them that are under the Law, as un-
der

SERM. *der the Law, that I might gain them that*
 X. *are under the Law; to them that are with-*
 ~~~~~ *out Law, as without Law, that I might*  
*gain them that are without Law. To the*  
*weak became I as weak, that I might gain*  
*the weak: I am made all Things to all*  
*Men, that I might by all means save*  
*some.*

From hence it would be well, if all Christians would take Example to treat one another with the same Christian Spirit, the same winning Softness, the same Tenderness and Condescension, the same meek, and mild, and peaceable Behaviour, if it were but to gain one another's Love, and to promote Peace and Unity in the Church. A little of the Apostle's most engaging Goodness, in complying with the little Prejudices and Infirmities of other Men, not exasperating and inflaming them by a fierce Resistance, but endearing ourselves to them by such slight Submissions, as might easily be made without Shipwreck of our Faith, or without betraying any Interest of Religion, would  
 doubtless



doubtless do more towards bringing SERM.  
them to a right Mind, than all the **X.**  
other Methods that can be used: much  
more, I am sure, than that furious  
Zeal which was exerted by our Apostle,  
while he continued to be a *Jew*, but  
as soon as he became a Christian, was  
forgotten. He that had *breathed out*  
*Slaughter against the Church*, was, im-  
mediately upon imbibing the mild Spi-  
rit of the Gospel, all Gentleness, Love  
and Sweetness; setting an Example to  
all other Christians, in what Manner  
they should treat their Brethren; in what  
Sense it is, that they should follow him,  
in like manner as he followed Christ,  
who said, *Learn of me, for I am meek*  
*and lowly*; and then, by giving Rest un-  
to the Souls of others, *ye shall also find*  
*Rest unto your own.*

But *Secondly*, Another Reason, which  
might induce the Apostle to take ano-  
ther Name upon him, might probably be  
this: The Judaizing Christians gave  
great Disturbance to the Gentile Con-  
verts,

SERM. verts, persuading them, that unless they

X. were circumcised and kept the Law,  
 they could not be admitted to that spiritual Deliverance, which *Christ Jesus* had accomplished for them. Against these Impressions the Apostle in his Writings seems to take great Care to guard them: And it is not improbable, that when he went among them, he might change that Name, which was given him at his Circumcision, to shew how little Stress he laid on it; to convince them that he had parted, together with his Name, from all the boasted Privileges of the *Jews*; that tho' he was a *Hebrew as well as they*; Tho' he was an *Israelite, as well as they*; of the *Seed of Abraham, as well as they*; yet these Things in his Account were not worth the Naming; he did utterly disclaim all Benefit and Advantage, to which he might be thought to have been intitled by them, having placed his whole Confidence in *Christ*. This he does very frequently and very solemnly declare:

But

But because on some Occasions, in SERM.  
Compliance with the *Jews*, he had X.  
done things himself, which might raise  
some Suspicion, that he was not quite  
averse to these Judaizing Doctrines; it  
was therefore incumbent on him, by all  
Methods in his Power to remove this  
Suspicion from him: And as it is too  
visible and notorious in the World, that  
weak Minds are much affected by Ap-  
pearances, it might, in this View, be  
thought advisable by the Apostle, to give  
them a standing Proof of his Opinion  
in this Matter, by changing the very  
Name he bore, thereby renouncing, in  
the most publick Manner, all Trust  
and Confidence in the ceremonial Law,  
which in Christ was quite abrogated  
and annulled.

And from hence we may learn, that  
in all Matters of Importance, when a-  
ny Service can be done to the Interests  
of Religion, by an open Declaration of  
our Principles and Opinions, and by a  
vigorous Opposition to those Persons  
who

SERM. who would subvert it, a good Man is not

X. at Liberty to disguise his Sentiments,  
 but bound to stand up in the Defence  
 of his Religion with a more open and  
 unreserved Zeal. It were much to be  
 wished, that all Sects and Parties, all  
 Marks and Titles of Distinction among  
 Christians, were utterly extinguished and  
 laid aside. But since this cannot be,  
 however we are obliged to treat one  
 another with all Christian Charity, no  
 Charity can oblige us, in Case of Dan-  
 ger to our selves, to be quite passive  
 and indifferent to our religious Interests,  
 in Deference to those of other Men.  
 The Profession of Religion in their own  
 Way and Manner, is what ought to  
 tender Consciences to be indulged: But  
 when this is done, and under this Pretence  
 we are required to proceed further still,  
 and by granting to *them more than their*  
*religious Rights, run the Risque of being*  
*beaten from our own,* it is Time to stop  
 short, and to secure our selves; how-  
 ever, for so doing, we may be falsely  
 censured,



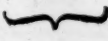
censured, as either Persecutors, or conten-  
tious Men. It is not to be doubted but

SERM.  
X.

the Judaizing Christians, whose Notions  
were more rigid than St. Paul's, were  
apt enough to defame him, as an Ene-  
my to the Law of *Moses*, which they,  
it seems, were very zealous to recom-  
mend. But, tho' he would gladly have  
given none Offence, neither to the  
*Jews*, nor to the Gentiles, as himself  
informs us, nor to any of the Church  
of God, yet because it was impossible  
to please all he had to do with, he was  
therefore compelled to declare openly  
for the Gentiles, in Opposition to the  
precise Notions of the *Jews*, who would  
fain have laid a Yoke upon their Bre-  
thren's Necks, *which neither they nor  
their Forefathers could bear.* Thus was  
he content, for the Good of many, for  
the Sake of Religion, and for the Sake  
of Christ, to do that which he knew  
would give Offence to some, and ex-  
pose him to their Censure and Reproach.  
And every Man, who acts on the same  
Principle

SERM. Principle as he did, will be obliged, as  
 X. often as there are any Differences in  
 the Church, to act in the same Man-  
 ner too. But

*Thirdly* and *Lastly*, Another Reason, and perhaps the chief, which might induce this Apostle to affect the Name of *Paul*, was to testify his Concern for what had happened to the Church, while he acted in his *Jewish* Character. The furious and intemperate Zeal he had exerted, before he was made a Profelyte to the Christian Faith, might raise so much Sorrow and Compunction afterwards, that, to shew what a thorough Change and Reformation was wrought in him, he might desire his former Name might be forgotten: He might set so great a Value on the new Character he had acquired, as, in Memory of his Conversion, to affect this Name, signifying, that he was no longer the same Person he was before; that he quitted all Advantages he had ever been posselt of, and desired to be considered  
 in

in no other Light, than that wherein SERM.  
Christ had placed him. Paul *called to X.*  
*be an Apostle of Jesus Christ, through the*   
*Will of God.*

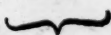
The Use we may make of this, is, to learn from his Example to set a just and due Value on our Christian Names, and to consider them, with him, as the highest Marks of Honour, by which we can be distinguished upon Earth. The Character of a Christian is a much greater Character, a more exalted Title, a more honourable Distinction, than any other that can be claimed by Man: And he that has a just Sense of the Benefits conveyed with it, will always esteem it the highest Privilege and Honour, the greatest Glory that in this World he can attain. *St. Paul*, we find, who himself assures us, he had many other things whereof to glory, laid them all aside, and counted them of no Worth, *that he might glory in the Cross of Christ.* That Cross, it seems, which had been *a Stumbling-Block to the*

SERM. Jews, *and by the* Greeks had been ac-

X. counted *Foolishness*, was in his Esteem  
 a better Claim to Glory, than either  
 his Birth, or his Learning gave him.  
 He *might* have gloried in his *Jewish*  
 Titles, *being circumcised the eighth Day,*  
*of the Stock of Israel, of the Tribe of*  
*Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews;*  
*as touching the Law, a Pharisee; concern-*  
*ing Zeal, persecuting the Church; touching*  
*the Righteousness which is in the Law,*  
*blameless:* He might have gloried in his  
 Learning, or Education as a *Jew*, hav-  
 ing been bred, as he tells us, *at the Feet*  
*of Gamaliel*, and being well acquainted,  
 as appears from his Writings, with the  
 Learning which then flourished among  
 the *Greeks*. But *what Things were Gain*  
*to him*, as he tells us in the same Place,  
*all these he counted Loss for Christ*. Thus  
 we see, what others would have been  
 proud of having, he was proud, if I  
 may so speak, of losing: He was plea-  
 sed, he was transported: It was his  
 Comfort, his Delight, his Glory, and his  
 Crown of Rejoicing. And



And what shall we say, who are SERM.  
Christians as well as he, who have all X.

the same Reason, and the same Title   
that he had, thus to triumph in the  
Cross of Christ, if in an Age over-run  
with Infidelity and Prophaneness, we are  
indifferent to the sacred Interests of the  
Gospel? if we patiently submit to hear  
it vilified and blasphemed; or, which is  
no less shameful, by the Wickedness of  
our Lives give Advantage to those who  
labour to destroy it? Let us remember  
that we are Christians; a Title which  
imports, that we have *put off the old  
Man with his Affections and Lusts, and  
are renewed in the Spirit of our Minds.*  
Let us shew and convince those who,  
in Opposition to the Gospel, would  
deprive us of the Succours of divine  
Grace in Christ, persuading us to rely  
on the mere Strength of Nature, what  
Advantages the true Christian has; and  
to what Heights of Virtue that Man  
may rise, whose Weaknesses and Infir-  
mities are sustained by Grace, and who

SERM. acts with eternal Happiness before him.

X. Let us never, my Brethren, lay aside  
these Thoughts: Let us always cherish  
and preserve them in us. For if any  
thing can stir us up to a Zeal for God's  
Glory, and to every other Virtue that  
is commendable in Man, it must be  
this Reflection, that we are Christians by  
Profession; that we have promised and  
engaged to forsake our Lusts, to resist  
the Devil, to bid Defiance to the World,  
to combat and oppose every Difficulty  
or Obstruction, that would hinder us  
in our Passage to that State of Glory,  
which it has pleased God, in *Christ Je-  
sus*, to propose to us. Let us always  
be ashamed, with these Views before  
us, to do any thing unworthy of the  
great Character we assume: And if  
worldly Greatness be an Argument with  
some, to do nothing that may stain their  
Honour, let this spiritual Greatness be  
an Argument with us, to walk worthy  
of the Vocation wherewith we have been  
called, to adorn our Profession, and by  
the

the Brightness of our Example, bring SERM.  
back to the great Shepherd and Phy- X.  
sician of our Souls, those unhappy  
Wanderers, who are at first offended  
by the dissolute and wicked Lives of  
Christians, and then become a Prey to  
the cunning Craftiness of those who, too  
successfully, lie in wait to deceive.

In short, whatever Treatment Christianity may receive, let its true Professors be still zealous to maintain it. For whosoever shall be ashamed of Christ or his Doctrine, in this wicked and corrupt Generation, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed hereafter, when he shall come in the Clouds of Heaven, as his Judge: But for them, who by patient Continuance in well doing shall seek for Glory and Honour and Immortality, there is laid up a Crown of Righteousness in Heaven.

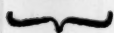
*Which the good God grant we may  
all receive, thro' the Merits of Je-  
sus Christ our Saviour, to whom,*

Q 3

*with*

SERM.

X.



*with the Father and the Holy Ghost,  
be ascribed, as is most due, all Ho-  
nour and Glory, Might, Majesty and  
Dominion, both now, and for ever-  
more.*







*We must not Judge others by what they suffer.*

A

# S E R M O N

Preached at St. James's.

LUKE xiii. 2, 3, 4, 5.

*And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye, that these Galileans were Sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?*

*I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

*Or those eighteen, upon whom the Tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, Think ye that they were Sinners above all Men that dwelt in Jerusalem?*

*I tell you, Nay: But except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

**I**T has been always observed as a SERM.  
Weakness in human Nature, that XI.

we are apt, upon all Occasions, to  
censure the Faults of others, and in the

Q 4

mean

SERM. mean time to be inattentive to our

XI. own. Against this, many Rules and

Precepts have been directed by those, who have undertook to instruct the World in the Principles of Moral Wisdom. Among the rest, our blessed Saviour, in his Sermon on the Mount, thought it a Subject too considerable to be omitted; expressing himself with some Warmth and Indignation against those, who were apt to discover *Motes* in the Eyes of others, and yet could not perceive *Beams* in their own. Notwithstanding this, we find in this Chapter some Persons, that in his Hearing, were guilty of the same Fault, upon the Occasion of an Accident which, it seems, had happened to some of his reputed Countrymen the *Galileans*, intimating, as one may judge from the Answer Christ makes, that they looked upon it as an Instance of God's high Displeasure, and as a Punishment inflicted on them for their Sins. *There were,* says the Evangelist, *present at that Season*

by what they suffer.

233

son, some who told him of the Galileans, SERM.  
whose Blood Pilate had mingled with their XI.

*Sacrifices: i. e. whom Pilate, for adhering to a Set of Men, who had declared it unlawful to pay Tribute to Cæsar, had taken Occasion, as they were sacrificing, to destroy. To this our Saviour answers in the Words of my Text, Suppose ye that these Galileans were Sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: But except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the Tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, Think ye, that they were Sinners above all Men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: But except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* From which Words of our Saviour, taken all together, it looks as if those who made this Reflection, were led to it by the Prejudices, they had conceived against the Country, to which the unhappy Sufferers belonged, and as if they were the more forward to surmise

SERM. mise the worst, because those who had  
XI. thus perished were *Galileans*, the Inhabitants of a Country, to which it is well known the *Jews* had a very great Dislike. To remove which Prejudice, and to teach them to judge charitably with respect to Mankind in general, our Saviour so frames and contrives his Answer, as to inform them, that the Accident which had happened to these Men, was neither owing to their being Sinners, nor *Galileans*. The first of which Assertions is exprest in plain Terms, and the second is implied in that Part of his Discourse, in which he produces another Instance of the same Kind, which had happened among the *Jews* at *Jerusalem*, where no less than eighteen Persons had been destroyed together by the Accident of a Tower's falling upon their Heads. By which Example he not only enforces the same Doctrine he had advanced before, but does further inform them, that what had happened to the *Galileans*, did not happen to them  
*because*



by what they suffer.

235

because they were Galileans, since they SERM.  
found that Misfortunes of the same XI.  
Kind with theirs, befel those of their  
own Country too. After which he proceeds to repeat the Admonition he had before given them, of the Danger they were in, assuring them *that if they did not repent of their Sins, they should all in like manner perish.*

Some have understood the Destruction here threatned, as spoken of that final Destruction in the next World, which is often call'd in Scripture *perishing*. For indeed it was true, that if they did not repent, *they should all likewise in that Sense perish.* But others have understood it, upon better Grounds, to have Respect to the temporal Destruction of that People, which our Saviour has elsewhere foretold; and which agrees much better with his Expression in this Place, importing, that they should suffer in the same Way and Manner with those who were before mentioned in my Text. For the Way, by which these Men are  
said

SERM. said to have suffered, was only by a

XI. temporal, and not by an eternal Death.

And therefore in this Sense it is most natural to understand the Punishment here threatned to them. However, as the Assertion in that other Sense is not only true, but very useful Doctrine, I shall not confine my self to either of these Senses, so far as to exclude the other: but so treat the Words in the following Discourse, as if both were intended by them.

The first thing I would shew, in pursuance of this Subject, is, that temporal Evils, and particularly that of Death, are sometimes inflicted by the Providence of God, as a Punishment for Perseverance in Sin.

Secondly, That they are not always inflicted with this View, but are sometimes intended, though we call them Evils, for the Benefit of those who suffer.

From whence I shall infer, Thirdly, That to take Occasion from them to  
censure

*by what they suffer.*

237

censure and defame the Sufferer, is an SERM.  
uncharitable and unchristian Practice. XI.  
And then just observe

Fourthly, That the Use which we ought to make of them, is to take Warning from them to amend our Lives, lest we also in like Manner perish.

First then, I am to shew, that all temporal Evils, and particularly Death, which is the last and greatest of them, are sometimes inflicted by God's Providence as a Punishment for Perseverance in Sin.

This Proposition seems naturally to be inferred from the Judgment which Christ threatens in my Text, where he tells the *Jews*, that if they did not repent, they should all suffer in like Manner as the *Galileans*, and in like Manner as their Countrymen, who were crushed to Death by the Tower which fell down upon their Heads: Which Prophecy of our Saviour was exactly verified in the Slaughter of that People, and the Destruction of their City, by the Arms  
of

SERM. of the Emperor *Vespasian*: And it is

XI. observed by some Writers, that this Event was attended with some Circumstances, to which our Saviour may be supposed to have had an Eye, in the Passage which is now before us. The Slaughter of this People, like that of the *Galileans*, was executed by a *Roman* Power: It happened on the Day when they were celebrating their Passover, and sacrificing the Paschal Lamb, at which Time it is probable, that the Blood of the slain might be mingled, like theirs, with their Sacrifices. It was done at *Jerusalem*, in which Circumstance it resembled both the Instances of Destruction in my Text: And it is not improbable, that many of the Inhabitants, like the eighteen Persons who are mentioned in my Text, were overwhelmed in the Destruction of their Citadels and Towers, and buried in the Ruins of them.

Now the Reason assigned for the Overthrow of this People, is, their final  
Impeni-



*by what they suffer.*

239

Impenitence, and Disobedience to God, SERM.  
in Opposition to the Voice of the XI.  
Messengers he had sent to reclaim them  
from the Errors of their Ways. In this  
Instance therefore it is evident, that  
God inflicted a temporal Evil, no less  
than that of Death, as a Punishment  
for Continuance in Sin. If it be said,  
that the Method of God's Dealing with  
the *Jews* was peculiar to the State of  
that People in particular, and cannot  
be drawn into Precedents by us, who  
are governed by very different Laws;  
to this it may be answered, that though  
the Acts of God's Providence are indeed  
at this Time less visible and conspicuous,  
yet they are not less certain than they  
were then: It is true, that God's Judg-  
ments were executed on this People, in  
a much more remarkable and exempla-  
ry Manner, than upon any that ever  
lived upon the Earth; Temporal Pro-  
sperity, and Success in their Underta-  
kings, being the Reward which was  
promised to their Obedience; and Tem-  
poral

SERM. poral Evil, such as bodily Diseases, the

XI. Pestilence, the Sword, and the Loss of

Liberty, being denounced to them as the Punishment of their Sins. Under this

Oeconomy, it was necessary for God's

Providence so visibly to interpose in their

secular Affairs, that as often as they

transgressed, they might read their Pu-

nishment in the Fortune which was sub-

sequent thereupon. When it pleased

God to make a better Covenant with

Man, when *Life and Immortality were*

*brought to Light*, and the Rewards and

Punishments of another World were set

in a clear View before us, the Reason

of this Conduct ceased. There was no

need to induce Men to the Practice of

their Duty, by temporal Rewards and

Punishments, because stronger and bet-

ter Motives were proposed. But does

it therefore follow, that God ceases to

interpose in the Government of our Ac-

tions, the Direction of Events, and the

Distribution of Good and Evil in this

World? His Judgments may be more

secret

*by what they suffer.*

241

secret and unsearchable than they were; SERM.  
it may not be so easy to discover his XI.  
Designs, and to see the Connexion be-  
tween the Punishment and the Sin, as  
it was in those Times, when such Mo-  
tives were wanting to confine Men  
within the Bounds of their Duty. But  
it cannot be inferred against the Truth  
of Facts, that therefore there is no Pu-  
nishment on this Side the Grave; much  
less, that Sinners are not sometimes cut  
off in the Height of their Impiety,  
when they are ripe for Judgment, and  
sent to account for their past Behavi-  
our, with the whole Load of their Ini-  
quity upon their Heads. For if we do  
but consider the known Attributes of  
God, it is impossible that his Provi-  
dence should ever be excluded from the  
Management of any Accident or Event.  
If therefore it is evident, that the Wick-  
ed do suffer, if temporal Evils do some-  
times befall them, if they are seen to  
drop off, and to be carried to their  
Graves in a State of Impenitence and

VOL I.

R

Rebellion

SERM. Rebellion against God, this cannot be

XI. done without God's Permission, nor indeed without his Counsel and Design.

That such things happen, Experience tells us: Nor can we well be ignorant in some flagrant Instances, of the Characters of those who suffer. When Men are openly and notoriously wicked, as some are without Cover or Disguise, it is no Breach of Charity to suppose them wicked, but agreeable to the Rule which our Saviour gives us: *By their Fruits ye shall know them.* When therefore by their Fruits they are thus discovered, when their Actions are exposed to publick View, and their Vices as well known as their Sufferings; in this Case they afford us a most convincing Evidence, that temporal Evils are sometimes inflicted by God's Providence for Perseverance in Sin. For whether these Evils are the natural Effects and Consequences of Sin committed, or whether they proceed from some other Cause, that has no visible Relation to

it,



*by what they suffer.*

243

it, they are still the Effect of God's so-  
vereign Power, who has, in some Cases, SERM.  
XI.  
by a natural Chain so coupled the Pu-  
nishment and the Sin together, that one  
necessarily draws on the other, and in  
some Cases is observed to bring about  
his Ends by more unpromising and un-  
likely Methods. But in both these Ca-  
ses, God's Hand is most certainly con-  
cerned: For nothing can be done with-  
out it.

Now when temporal Evils are in-  
flicted on such Persons, as do not make  
a proper Use of them, but continue in  
their Sins, and despise Correction,  
esteeming it perhaps, the Effect of  
Chance, and not of God's Goodness to  
them, it is plain, that the Sufferings  
which these Men endure, can to them  
be nothing else but Punishments. To  
others they may be a Warning to for-  
sake their Sins; but to themselves, I  
say, who make no such Use of them,  
they *can* be nothing else but Punishments:  
Especially when they are overtaken and

R 2

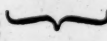
surprized

SERM. surprized by Death, the last temporal

XI. Evil that can befall them, this cannot  
 but be considered as the greatest of all  
 Punishments they can suffer on this Side  
 the Grave, and indeed as the Beginning  
 of that endless Punishment, which is  
 reserved for such Men hereafter.

But Secondly, Though this be sometimes the Case, we are not to understand, that any temporal Evil is always inflicted with this only View, but that sometimes they are intended, though we call them Evils, for the Benefit of those who suffer. Many are the Examples of this Kind in Scripture, many in the Histories of those holy Martyrs, that have suffered for the Name of Christ. Not to mention the Sufferings of our Lord himself, whose Example in this Kind is the less fit to be here urged, because the *Chastisement of our Peace was upon him*, and to him were imputed, though innocent in his own Person, the Sins of Mankind in general. But it was not so with other holy Persons,  
 who

by what they suffer. 245

who have suffered Persecution, in all SERM.  
Ages of the World, for the Sake of XI.  
Truth and Innocence. *Their Example*   
is doubtless an Argument, in this  
Case, against which no Exception can  
be made. Such were the Afflictions of  
*Job* and *Joseph*, of *David* and *Daniel*,  
and many others, in holy Writ, whose  
Stories, the Apostle tells us, *were writ-*  
*ten for our Learning, that we through*  
*Patience, and Comfort of the Scriptures,*  
*might have Hope.* Such also were the  
Sufferings of that Apostle himself, and  
of all his Brethren and Fellow-Labourers  
in the Lord, who trod in the Steps of  
the great Captain of their Salvation,  
and like him were *made perfect through*  
*Sufferings.* And such, without doubt,  
are the Poverty and Sickneſs, the Pain,  
the Sorrow, the Contempt, the Shame,  
and all the other Sufferings of many  
righteous and good Persons now. These  
are so far from being meant as Punish-  
ments, that they are in truth the great-  
est Blessings that can befall them. Good

R 3

Men

SERM. Men may sometimes be so elevated and

XI. transported by a Sense of their own Innocence and Virtue, that it may be necessary for their own Sakes, to keep them humble and obedient, by the wholesome Discipline of Adversity and Distress. *The Thorn in the Flesh*, that was given to St. Paul, the *Messenger of Satan that was sent to buffet him*, (by which we are probably to understand some malicious Persecutor, that it pleased God to raise up against him) was, according to the Account which himself has given of it, intended for this Purpose only. And surely it is a very kind and gracious Dispensation, by a short Affliction, *which endureth but for a Moment*, to mortify a Passion, which, if it were to be indulged, might sink them in eternal Misery. Prosperity is apt to captivate and ensnare the Heart, tempting us, by degrees, from the Love of God and Virtue, and placing our Affections, which ought to rise to Heaven, on the low Pleasures of this present



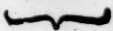
sent Life. To deliver us from these SERM.  
Dangers, God is pleased sometimes to XI.  
deprive us of those things which are  
most dear and valuable; that we may  
learn to set our Hearts on those heaven-  
ly Enjoyments, that will infinitely over-  
pay the Loss of them. Thus are the  
seeming Evils and Calamities of Life,  
by an infinitely wise, and most graci-  
ous God, converted into real Blessings;  
and the Righteous have great Reason to  
return Thanks to God for those things,  
which would be thought Hardships by  
the Wicked, as well knowing, if they  
can but weather out the Storms, to  
which this Life is unavoidably exposed,  
he will guide and conduct them by his  
holy Spirit, *till they arrive at the Ha-  
ven where they would be.* And from  
hence we may observe *lastly*, that even  
Death it self, which, when it is an E-  
vil, is the worst Evil we can suffer, is  
to good Men the Consummation of  
their Happiness, according to that com-  
fortable and chearful Doctrine, revealed

SERM. to St. *John* by a Voice from Heaven,

XI *Blessed are the Dead which die in the Lord.*

Yea, saith the Spirit; that they may rest from their Labours, and their Works do follow them. They rest from their Labours, that is, they are delivered from the Disturbances of this present Life, and their Works do follow them, and cause them to be accepted at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Here it will be seen, whether the Evils of this Life have been Punishments or Blessings to us. Here it will appear, who have suffered for their Sins, and who for the Sake of Righteousness; who have improved under God's Corrections, and to whom they have been sent in vain. In the mean time it will be best to suspend our Judgments, and not to be over-forward in such Points as these; but remember the Advice of our blessed Saviour, *Judge not, that ye be not judged.* Which leads me to observe

Thirdly, That for any Men to take Occasion from any temporal Evil that befalls

befalls their Brethren, to censure and SERM.  
defame the Sufferer, is an uncharitable XI.  
and unchristian Practice. 

This will appear from what has been observed in my Discourse on the foregoing Heads. For if it be true, that all temporal Evils are inflicted, sometimes as a Punishment for Sin, and sometimes to preserve us from it; if it be true, that some Men are cut off in their Sins, as *Vessels of Wrath fitted to Destruction*, and others are carried off from this evil World to a State of Rest and Peace and Safety: it follows, that there is no judging from any Accident or Disaster, that can possibly befall another, that therefore he was a wicked Man; since Troubles and Disappointments, Afflictions and Persecutions must needs happen to all Men promiscuously, to the Wicked as a Terror and Discouragement to Vice, and to the Good, to secure their Virtue. From what a Man *does*, we may make a Judgment of his Guilt; but from what he

SERM. he *undergoes*, we *cannot*. The former

XI. is a Rule that Christ has given us; and *therefore* we may use it safely: But the latter is a Rule of our own *inventing*; and which nothing but our Want of Charity can suggest. Our Saviour, you see, has discountenanced it in my Text, telling those who were so forward to make Misconstructions to the Disadvantage of the unfortunate *Galileans*, that there was nothing in their Sufferings, nor in those of other People, from which it could be inferred, that they were greater Sinners, than those who had the Fortune to survive them; and thereby checking that malicious Spirit, which is apt to break out in unjustifiable Liberties with respect to other People's Characters, admonishing them withal, *that if they did not repent, they should all in like manner perish*. From whence I shall take Occasion to proceed to my

IV. Fourth Head; That the Use, which we ought to make of all temporal



*by what they suffer.*

251

ral Calamities, which are inflicted by SERM.  
God's Providence on others, is, to take XI.  
Warning from them to amend our own  
Lives, lest we also *in like Manner pe-*  
*riish.* It is the Property of true Wisdom,  
from every thing which occurs, to draw  
something for our own Benefit and Ad-  
vantage. Whatever Observations we  
make on others, if they are not direct-  
ed to this useful Purpose, are in truth  
of no Consequence or Importance.  
And yet if one were to judge from the  
Practice of the World, one would think,  
that the only End and Design of Know-  
ledge, was to enable us to make shrewd  
and severe Reflexions on the Conduct  
of other Men. God knows, there is  
Room enough, and too much for Cen-  
sure in the Lives of the most upright  
Men. But is there any Wisdom, or  
any Virtue, or any thing *else*, that is  
praise-worthy, in being ready upon all  
Occasions to expose them? Let those  
whom we thus censure, be as guilty as  
we please: It will not excuse us, if  
notwith-

SERM. notwithstanding this, we are guilty of  
XI. any Faults our selves: Whatever be-  
comes of *them*, howsoever *they* are dealt  
with, whatever they *suffer*, or whatever  
they deserve, there is no Question but  
we are all accountable for our selves.  
We are not to answer at the Throne  
of God for any Sins or Misdemeanors of  
theirs. We shall have enough to do to  
justify our *own Actions*, and to excuse  
our *own Conduct there*. Little shall  
we be concerned about the Fate of  
others, any further than a charitable  
Disposition may incline us to wish  
well to the whole Race of Men. In  
the mean time, whatever Hardships and  
Severities we escape, that are inflicted  
upon our Christian Brethren; we should  
first make it Matter of Praise and  
Thanksgiving, that we are rescued and  
delivered by God's gracious Providence  
from the Multitude of Disasters, Afflic-  
tions and Calamities, that are sent  
among the Sons of Men; that *under the*  
*Covering of his Wings*, and through his  
Protection,

*by what they suffer.*

253

Protection, *we need not be afraid for a* SERM.  
*ny Terror by Night, nor for the Arrow XI.*  
*that flieth by Day; for the Pestilence that*  
*walketh in Darknes, nor for the Destruction that walketh at Noon-day:* that notwithstanding our great and manifold Transgressions, he is pleased to spare the Rod, and to call us to Repentance and Amendment of Life, not by our *own* but other People's Sufferings. To this End, in the *last* Place, we should labour to concur with these his most gracious Purposes; and consider, that if his Justice *had been extreme to mark* the Sins that have been committed by us; the worst of those Evils, that other Men have suffered, might possibly have been inflicted on us: That the Patience and Forbearance, which has hitherto been shewn us, as it is more perhaps than we have asked of God, more certainly than we have deserved to find, so it is more than the Impenitent can expect: And that those who despise *the Riches of God's Goodness, do but treasure up to themselves*

SERM. *themselves Wrath against the Day of*

XI. *Wrath, which will come at last, however it be deferred, and overwhelm them with a most sure Destruction. And which now should one chuse? to afflict our Souls with a Sense of these things at present, or to suffer the worst that God's Vengeance can inflict, when he pours out the Vials of his Wrath upon us? Who can find Words to set forth the Difference between the Sorrow for Sin, that is now required, and the Sorrow for Punishment, the Remorse of Conscience, the Agonies of Pain, the Terror, the Despair, that shall torture the wicked Soul for ever? It is a fearful thing, my beloved Brethren, to fall into the Hands of the living God; whose Wrath is as dreadful, whose Vengeance as severe, as his Goodness is great and wonderful. This is the Time to make use of Mercy. It will be too late to knock when the Doors are shut: Too late to cry for Mercy, when it is the Time of Justice. God grant, that all Sinners may*



*by what they suffer.*

255

may lay this to Heart, and seriously SERM.  
consider how short their Time is, that **XI.**  
they may understand both the Judg-  
ments and Loving-kindness of the Lord,  
and in good Time lay hold of Mercy,  
through the Merits and Mediation of  
him that has redeemed us, even *Jesus*  
*Christ* our Lord,

*To whom, with the Father, and the*  
*Holy Ghost, &c.*



*A*



*A Posthumous Fame not worth  
the Seeking.*

A

S E R M O N

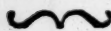
On GEN. V. 25, 26, 27.

*And Methuselah lived an hundred eighty  
and seven Years, and begat Lamech.*

*And Methuselah lived, after he begat La-  
mech, seven hundred eighty and two Years,  
and begat Sons and Daughters.*

*And all the Days of Methuselah were nine  
hundred sixty and nine Years, and he died.*

SERM.  
XII.



CRITICAL Dissertation  
concerning the Age of the  
Patriarchs, would be a Sub-  
ject of so little Use in a po-  
pular Discourse, that I do not think it  
worth insisting on. I shall therefore  
but

but just observe, that the Years, by SERM.  
which *Moses* reckon'd, were neither XII.  
*Egyptian* nor *Arabian* Years, the latter  
of which consisted but of six Months,  
and the former but of thirty Days.  
But they were Years nearly, though not  
exactly of the same Length with ours.  
And consequently that the Age of *Methuselah* was, according to our Account,  
very little different from that which is  
allotted him in my Text.

I shall not trouble you with my Reasons for this Opinion, thinking it will be of more Benefit to all of us, to raise a few practical Observations upon the Subject, that may have an Influence upon our Lives and Manners.

First then, you may observe, that the short Account, which I have read to you, is all that the divine Wisdom has been pleas'd to tell us concerning the oldest of the Sons of Men. That at the Age of one Hundred and Eighty seven he begat a Son called *Lamech*, that after this he begat other Sons and

V O L. I.

S

Daughters,

SERM. Daughters, that he lived nine Hundred  
XII. Sixty nine Years, and that he died.

— This is the whole History of his Life and Actions; and this is a true Picture of the Generality of Mankind, who think themselves of great Consequence in the World. They marry and are given in Marriage, they perform the common Offices of Nature, they eat, and drink, and die: And all that their Posterity is like to know of them, is the Number of Years they lived, the Names of the Children they begot, and perhaps the Sum total of the Wealth they left behind them, after a painful and penurious Life. Now who would wish for such a Fame as this, or who would desire to be so impertinently remembered, for Circumstances which do no Honour to his Memory? To have one's Name quite buried in Oblivion, and be as if it had never been, has indeed neither Good nor Harm in it: But for a Man to be recorded as a Trifler, to be distinguished for egregious Insigni-



Insignificance, is at least a Proof that SERM  
he had no Merit to recommend him, XII  
and a shrewd Sign that he was memo-  
rable for his Vices.

It would be well therefore, if all  
those, who are so fond of this post-  
humous Acquaintance with Mankind,  
would consider in what Light Posterity  
will regard them; whether they think  
it will redound to their Honour, that they  
died on such a Day, that they measur'd  
so many Years upon Earth, and did  
nothing worth recording upon their  
Monuments. In particular, they should  
bethink themselves, whether they are  
Masters of any amiable, or any useful  
Quality, and whether, if their Actions  
were drawn out to View, they would  
appear in a better Light than *Methuse-  
lah's*. If not, their Names are not  
worth preserving, and Silence is the best  
Compliment that can be paid them.

Thus much for these Blanks and Cy-  
phers in Society, which enjoy a Kind  
of vegetable Life, without ever approv-

SERM.ing themselves to be rational Beings,  
 XII. or acting up to the Dignity of their  
 { Nature. There are others of a more  
 active and lively Turn, who are as far  
 from entertaining any manly Sentiment,  
 or doing any thing more agreeable to  
 their Reason. I mean those who are  
 led away by their sensitive Appetites,  
 and have a great Alacrity in all brutish  
 Pleasures. *Methuselah*, for ought we  
 know, might be one of this latter  
 Stamp, notwithstanding there is so lit-  
 tle said of him in my Text. For of all  
 the Sons of *Adam*, that make up the  
 Genealogy of *Noah*, *Enoch* is the only  
 Person, that is said to have walked with  
 God; from whence there is too much  
 Reason to conclude, that the rest were  
 of a different Character: It being scarce  
 imaginable, that the Historian, who  
 has taken so much Care to do Honour  
 to one of them, should have omitted  
 to do Justice to the rest. It is there-  
 fore no improbable Supposition, when  
 we consider the Degeneracy of the Age  
 he

he lived in, and the universal Corrup-<sup>SERM.</sup>  
tion of Manners, which at that Time XII.  
prevail'd, that our Patriarch might have  
caught the Infection. Who knows but  
he was a Pretender to Wit and Hu-  
mour, a Ridiculer of the Preachers of  
Righteousness, and far gone in those  
fashionable Vices which caused the uni-  
versal Deluge? And what a mortifying  
Reflexion must it be to a polite and  
well-bred Sinner, to consider, that  
even in that awkward Age, before the  
modern Arts of Gallantry were in Being,  
Iniquity should be carried to so great a  
Height, that it was very near extirpa-  
ting the Species! Nothing can give us  
so mean an Idea of the Pretensions of  
our Men of Pleasure, as to compare  
them with an Antediluvian Reprobate.  
What a grotesque and uncouth Figure  
would *Methuselah* be apt to make, if  
he were drawn by a modern Painter!  
and yet, for ought any one knows, *Me-  
thuselah* might be as accomplish'd a  
Rake, as polite a Libertine as himself,

SERM. On the contrary, could we raise up

XII. the Patriarch, to survey the Pleasures of  
his modern Followers, what a despicable Sett of Wretches would he think them! Whatever we may fancy of our Refinements upon Wickedness, it will appear that we can no more out-act the Vices, than we can rival the Virtues of our Predecessors. Some Advantages they certainly had above any of their puny Successors. They had a long Scene of Life before them, to perpetuate and lengthen out their Pleasures. They could spin out an Intrigue for threescore Years together, and bestow as much Time upon the Gratification of one Desire, as we can upon the whole Business of our Lives. Besides this, as their Bodies were more durable than ours, so were they likewise proportionably robust. For without supposing the Strength of Nature to decay, her Offspring to become more weak and feeble in the several Periods and Successions of Time, we may presume that  
soon



soon after the Flood, at least, the Strength SERM.  
of Men was much impaired, inasmuch XII.  
as it requires less natural Vigour to sup-  
port a Man to the Age of Eighty or  
Ninety, than eight or nine hundred  
Years. How must it move the Scorn  
then of one of these ancient Libertines,  
to see a Creature so full of Weakness  
and Infirmary, pretending to the Primi-  
tive Vigour and Activity, and aping  
his strong Progenitors! I chuse to re-  
present these despicable Vermin as the  
Objects of Derision only, because it is  
the Method, which they constantly  
make use of, to discountenance every  
thing that is of good Report: Besides that  
it is in a manner the only Sort of Ar-  
gument, that we can suppose them ca-  
pable of understanding. Not but if  
the abandon'd Wretches could be per-  
suaded to think seriously of their Con-  
dition, if they would look backward  
upon what they have been doing, and  
forward upon what they have to do; if  
they would reflect upon the transitory

SERM. Nature of their Enjoyments, and the

XII. Certainty of either a weak Old-age, or  
 ~~~~~ an immature and hasty Death, they  
 could not, if they had the least Degree
 of Sensibility, withstand the Terrors of
 such a powerful Conviction. For I
 would ask one of this Stamp and Cha-
 racter, whether he thinks there was not
 once a Time, when *Methuselah* was as
 young as he; whether he expects to
 out-live that Patriarch; or if he does,
 whether he shall never die. If it be
 true, that he must die at last, no mat-
 ter how long his Life is; no matter
 what Youth and Beauty, what Strength
 and Vigour he enjoys. But where is
 the voluptuous Libertine, that lives out
 even half his Days? How often is he
 cut off in a Midnight Revel, or in the
 prosecuting of a criminal Amour! The
 Pains and Infirmities of Age are his
 Portion even in the Bloom of Youth.
 His Vigour is worn out at once; and
 the rest of his Days are but Labour and
 Sorrow, under the Fears of quitting
 even

even this wretched Being, and entering SERM.
upon another more dreadful and discouraging; disabled for the Pleasures of this XII.
Life, he has no Relish for the Happiness of a better; and the most that can be said of him, is, that he lives under a perpetual Uncertainty, whether he should wish to live or die.

This puts me in Mind of another Sort of People, who fall naturally under my Observation, while I am speaking of the Miseries of Life: I mean those, who are not contented with the short Span, that is allotted them, but are ever wishing to extend their Days beyond the common Measure of Existence. This Passion is apt to grow upon us in the Decline of Life, at a Time, when one would think the very Infirmities of our Nature should incline us to take Refuge in the Grave. What an abject State of Mind is it, thus to linger upon the Brink of a Precipice, when we are sure we must take the Leap at last! Especially since Age it self is so great an
Evil,

SERM. Evil, that nothing but the Consideration
 XII. of a well-spent Life can mitigate or assuage
 ~~~~~ the Pain of it. It is a fine Reflexion, that  
 we meet with in a Fragment of a *Greek*  
 Poet, 'That *he* is the happiest Man,  
 ' who after having survey'd the Won-  
 ' ders of Nature, retires soonest to the  
 ' Place from whence he came.' Life has  
 no further Entertainments even for the  
 Wise and Good, much less for those  
 who spend it in a Circle of Vice and  
 Folly, Wantonness and Impertinence.  
 There is not in Nature a more melan-  
 choly Consideration, than a superannu-  
 ated Libertine. His Youth is despica-  
 ble, but his Old-age is below Contempt.  
 How shocking is it to see him in the  
 Impotence of Desire, drudging on in  
 the Service of his Lusts, and betraying  
 by the last Efforts of Wickedness he  
 can make, that he would still be more  
 wicked if he could! At the same time  
 he sees that he is the Jest of Fools, and  
 that he is scarce pitied by the Wise and  
 Good: So that all he wishes, when he  
 wishes



wishes for Old-Age, is, to wear out the SERM.  
last Dregs and Refuse of Life in the XII.  
most afflicting Circumstances of Shame  
and Misery: To be the Scorn and De-  
rision of all that are round about him,  
and not so much as the Favourite of  
himself: Under the most disheartning  
of all Terrors, Contempt, not to have  
the Testimony of his own Conscience,  
nor even of his own Vanity to support  
him; to be conscious that no one va-  
lues or esteems him, and at the same  
time to be conscious he deserves it: To  
have out-liv'd the Capacity of enjoying  
Life, or even seeming to enjoy it hand-  
somely; and to be convinced by every  
thing he sees or hears, that it is Time  
for him to quit the Stage, and make  
room for those, who are more fit for  
Pleasure, and who can become it with a  
better Grace.

This indeed is the Case of the Wick-  
ed only, and of those who are full of  
youthful Follies. But Old-Age is far  
from being an Object of Desire, even  
in

SERM. in its best and most venerable Circum-  
XII. stances. The Ancients have given us  
a very just Idea of it in the well known  
Fable of *Tithonus*, and all that has been  
ever said to represent it in better Colours,  
has been rather what one would wish  
to find it, than what it was ever found  
to be. The *Roman* Orator, in the  
Decline of Life, wrote an elaborate  
Treatise to recommend it. But all  
that either his Wisdom could suggest, or  
his Eloquence display upon the Subject,  
amounts to no more than Comfort. I  
mean, while he represents us as we really  
are, and confines himself within the  
Powers of Nature. For his *Cato* is a  
Romanick Character, and like that of  
his perfect Orator, made up of so many  
Beauties and Excellencies, as never met  
in any single Man. At the same time  
we must do him the Justice to acknow-  
ledge, that if Old-Age could be made a  
Blessing to any Man, it must be to such  
a Man as *Cato*, whose early Virtues, even  
in the Dawn of Youth, gave the most  
reasonable Expectations, that his Old-  
Age

Age would be crown'd with Honour. SERM.  
Not that this or any thing else is a suf- XII.  
ficient Security against the Assaults and  
Injuries of Time. How often do we  
see the Ruins of an excellent Understan-  
ding so disfigur'd and defac'd with Age,  
and reduc'd to such a wretched State of  
Childishness and Dotage, as is a Reproach  
to human Reason! Who knows, how  
soon he himself may sink down to such  
miserable and disgraceful Circumstances!  
who would accept of the longest Life  
upon such base and ignominious Terms!  
Sure none can be so fond of this pre-  
sent World, but those who fear to ven-  
ture upon another! And those would  
repine at their Share of Life, if it were  
extended to twice its Length. Nothing  
less than Eternity would content them.  
For whatever was at last to have an End,  
would, whenever that End approach'd,  
awaken in their Minds a Sense of their  
Guilt, and produce the same Fears and  
Terrors.

The Happiness therefore of human  
Life consists not in the Number of Years,  
but

SERM. but the Virtues that are practis'd in it.

XII. It is but a Passage to a better State, and he that has his Eye fix'd upon his Journey's End, will never be offended at the Shortness of it. *Methuselah* lived nine hundred and Sixty nine Years, and *Enoch* but three hundred and sixty five. One of them secured a blessed Immortality : Concerning the other, we know only that he died. And I hope I need not put the Question to any one, whether he had rather be *Methuselah* or *Enoch*.

Thus much for Human Life in general : I come now to consider the Titles and Marks of Honour, that distinguish us from each other in it ; which, however they may divide the World at present, will in a little Time be quite silenced and extinguish'd. What do we know of the Patriarch in my Text, or of those that went before or after him ? There is but one Instance in the Catalogue, of a Man eminent for his Virtue, or fam'd for any thing, but multiplying his Species. Which of them was most noted  
for



for his Wisdom, which of them for his SERM.  
Strength, or Beauty, or whatever else XII.  
could at that Time be made Matter of  
Distinction, concerning this we have no  
History nor Tradition; and what a poor  
Idea must we form from hence of all  
our little Strifes and Competitions?  
Are any of these Worthies either the  
better or the worse for the high or low  
Stations they possess'd? Their Fortunes  
are now determin'd, and they are reduc'd  
to the same common Level. *Their  
Love also, and their Hatred, and their  
Envy is now perished; neither have they  
any more a Portion for ever in any thing  
that is done under the Sun.* Eccl. ix. 6.  
Such will be the State of all the Great  
ones, whose Names fill the World with  
Wonder. They shall lie down alike in the  
Dust, and the Worms shall cover them.  
And is it worth while, think you, for  
an ambitious Spirit to rend the World  
into Sects and Parties for the Sake of  
such a short-liv'd Glory? Since Life is  
so soon to have an End, 'tis no Matter  
what

SERM. what Part we act in it. At present it  
 XII. is of very little Consequence to our Re-  
 pose, and in a while it will be quite  
 forgotten.

And this leads me to consider in the  
 last Place, the Nature of Fame in ge-  
 neral; especially that which springs up  
 from the Grave, and has its Rise from  
 the solemn Obsequies of the Dead. I  
 doubt not, but the venerable Patriarch,  
 whose Name I have so often mentioned,  
 is either ignorant that I am now de-  
 canting upon his History, or indifferent  
 whether I praise or blame him; *and is*  
*deaf to our Censures and Applauses,* for  
 to his own Master must he *stand or*  
*fall.* And from hence we may learn  
 to despise that reversionary Fame, which  
 depends on the good Opinion of Poste-  
 rity. *Tully*, in the Dream of *Scipio*, has  
 carried this Thought to as great a Height,  
 as mere human Reason could pursue it.  
 And yet you may observe how fondly  
 he presages to himself the Applause of  
 After-Ages; with how much Delight he  
 dwells

dwells upon the Idea, and with what SERM. Ardency of Expectation he thirsted after XII. it. Had this great Man been acquainted with our Religion, and believ'd as much as we do of the State of departed Spirits, how would he have despis'd all sublunary Glory depending upon the Breath of Men! Religion opens a new Scene of Ambition, by recommending us to Beings of a superior Nature: Those Angels, who are said to rejoice at our Repentance, cannot be suppos'd to be inattentive to our Actions. And would it not be a more generous Ambition to endeavour after their Applause, than that of Creatures as full of Frailties as our selves? especially since the Time will come, when if it is not our own Fault, we shall be remov'd from the groveling Pursuits of this transitory Life, to the Society of those blessed Spirits. It is therefore a very probable Argument, that our Concern for a Reputation in this present World shall cease with our Being in it, because we shall converse with in-

SERM. what Part we act in it. At present it  
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SERM. intellectual Spirits of a more elevated and  
XII. exalted Nature. It will be natural for

us; in this Change of our Condition, to aspire after their Praise and Approbation; and in the Hope of this, how little shall we be affected with any Glory we shall receive on Earth! The Reason why we are apt to be unmov'd at these Thoughts in our Life-Time, is because they are too refin'd and abstracted. But the Time will come, when the Partition between the two Worlds will be broken down, the whole Tribe of intellectual Beings be laid open to our View, and we shall know, even as also we are known. Then will our Ambition take a nobler Turn, we shall aim at the Esteem of celestial Beings, and the frail Monuments we have been erecting upon Earth, shall from thenceforth be for ever buried in Oblivion.

Thus have I laid before you some short Reflections upon the Vanity of human Life. I have taken Occasion from what is told us of *Methuselah*, to observe

observe, that to do nothing in Life is SERM.  
ridiculous; that to follow nothing but XII.  
Pleasure is vain; that long Life is not  
worth enjoying; Titles and Distinctions  
not worth the seeking; and that a Fame  
after Death is lost upon us. I shall con-  
clude therefore with these short Direc-  
tions. If we desire our Lives may not  
be useless to the Publick, let us fill them  
up with Acts of Charity and Benefi-  
cence: If we would avoid being bewitch'd  
with Pleasure, let us begin to despise  
it young: If we would provide a-  
gainst the Miseries of Age, let us  
arm our selves with an early Piety:  
If we are fond of Rank and Prece-  
dence, let us consider that Death will  
level us: And if we are desirous of  
Fame hereafter, let us reflect that we  
shall be incapable of enjoying it. In  
general let us all remember, that we  
are intended for another Life, and  
let us fix all our Hopes of Happi-  
ness, of Fame, and of Pleasure there.  
While

276 *A Posthumous Fame not, &c.*

SERM. While we look not at the things which  
XII. are seen; but at the things, which are  
~~~~~ not seen: For the things which are seen,  
are temporal; but the Things which
are not seen, are eternal.

Now to God the Father, &c.

End of the First Volume.



~~1792~~ · 1791